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LIFE'S AN ART

FRANC-NOHAIN

LIFE'S AN ART

By FRANC-NOHAIN

There are books in plenty which tell you how to think and how to play bridge. But there are very few on "how to live." Franc-Nohain is therefore a kind of pioneer, and all France has dutifully applauded him as an originator and—what is more—a delightful writer. (Seventy-four thousand copies of his book were sold in France in four months after publication.) Franc-Nohain has, he admits, lived in the modern world with relish and zest for fifty years. And yet he is no modernist. He would say with old Montaigne that all the good rules have been laid down and that what remains for us to do is to apply them. It is practice—the wisdom, courtesy, and humor demanded for everyday existence—which LIFE'S AN ART stresses. There are admirable (and amiable) chapters on such matters as flaming youth and crabbed age, marriage and what follows, citizenship, faith in God. But Franc-Nohain devotes quite as much attention to the foibles and pleasures, the fun and the pathos, which pave the by-paths of existence. His book is, as the *Mercure de France* declared, as wise and lovable a thing as has been printed for years. It makes its appearance as the first volume in the new Malta Books.

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Who is Franc-Nohain?

Franc-Nohain is the name under which Maurice Legrand is known to the literary and musical world. He was born at Corbigny (Nièvre) on October 25, 1873. Like so many other French lads of the provinces, he came to Paris upon the completion of his education and took up the profession of law. Later, he served as *sous-prefet;* saw distinguished service during the War; took part in many civic activities.

Gradually he became known as a "humorous poet." His work was widely and warmly appreciated. The list of his books is long, and includes: *La Grenouille et le Capucin*, *Vingt Mille Ans*, and *Fables*. He has compiled an anecdotal history of the Great War, and written much about musical and dramatic matters.

To the American public, Franc-Nohain is possibly best known as the author of *L'Heure Espagnole*, for which M. Ravel wrote the music.

LIFE'S AN ART

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LIFE'S AN ART

FRANC-NOHAIN, pseud.

Le Grand, Maurice.

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LIFE'S AN ART

I. LIFE'S AN ART

After having lived half a century, I am undertaking to write on how to live. No doubt you will object that I am a little tardy, that such a work on the table of a man of my age is like serving mustard at the end of dinner.

But life is an art that does not admit of infant prodigies.

May I flatter myself that this discussion of life as an art will be more useful to those who come after me than to myself—to my children and grandchildren, nephews, grandnephews and great-grandnephews?

This brings up at once the question of experience. We never draw any real benefit, any decisive and helpful lesson from our own experience; we derive much less from the experience of others. If it were otherwise the matter would be too simple, and in the five thousand years and more during which man has lived on the earth the art of living would have reached such a point of perfection that we should all be masters of it.

Life is always choice. That is why it is an art. To live is to choose, to live happily is to know how to choose, and happiness depends on the nature of our choice.

Now, a preference cannot be dictated. To the child who chooses a kite in preference to a doll, or a cream-puff instead of an almond-cake, you will vainly lecture on the excellence of cream-puffs or the joy of dolls. "Yes, but I like almond-cakes better! Yes, but I like kites better!" He will end the matter thus, after listening to you, polite but bored.

Besides, we should have had to meet at the pastry-shop or at the toyman's.

Why did you take the left side of the street this morning instead of the right? On the right you would not have met the woman whom you will marry, for better or for worse—the banker who will ruin you or make your fortune. Not one house on the right side of the street had such a flimsy chimney that the wind could topple it over on your head as happened when you walked down the left-hand side. . . .

Left or right, instinctive choice or deliberate choice: I took the left side of the street because it was in the shade; I took the left side because my heart is on that side; I took the left side because the important thing is not to go left or right but to go forward, because the important thing is not to stand still.

We seek reasons for acting, for coming to some decision. If we can't decide we spin a coin.

"Heads, I'll take the right. Tails, I'll take the

left." The coin is tossed up. Does it fall heads?

"I don't care, I'll go to the left anyway."

This perpetual desire to make decisions, this fever, this haste, bring about what we know as lack of time. We say that the man who is not decisive wastes his time. But does not our very haste threaten to waste it still more?

Persuaded rightly enough that our time is limited, we are nevertheless ignorant of its precise limits. That uncertainty leads us to dispose of it as if it were limitless. Who would consent to heed limits that cannot be measured by the eye or defined by the mind?

Time that passes quickly is past time. We refuse to set up a common measure between the past and the future.

Suppose that I, a man of fifty, should live to be a hundred—which is not very likely. What do these fifty years before me represent? Two thousand six hundred weeks, eighteen thousand two hundred and fifty days. If I add two hundred and eighty hours for leap-years, my last hour will be the four hundred and thirty-eight thousand two hundred and eighty-eighth after this.

No, these are not astronomical figures. The total is a concrete fact—this total that diminishes by one unit every sixty minutes—four hundred and thirty-eight thousand two hundred and eighty-seven . . .

four hundred and thirty-eight thousand two hundred and eighty-six. . . .

Yet for all that, are we more patient, more thrifty with the present hour?

When we look back we are well aware that an hour, like a week or a year, amounts to very little.

How balance the account of half a century?

Here we are, fifty years old. Suppose someone puts in front of us a note book full of white pages and invites us to set down in it everything we have done, everything that has happened to us since we were born. How would we ever succeed in filling the pages? Some periods of ten years could be described in a few lines—a funeral, a journey, a tooth-ache, the haunting memory of a refrain, of a perfume, the glimpse of a passer-by, a phrase overheard, a mistake made (not a very serious mistake), a pleasantry repeated to satiety (but not very funny), and that accounts for ten years. Also we shall do no more, see no more, hear no more than five times as much as this on our way to a hundred.

Yet actually, in contrast to these years that have slipped away, it seems to us that we will never use up the years to come. While the past appears diminished, skimped, reduced to nothing, as if always seen through the large end of a telescope, the future looms up big and important, full of magnificent details that our accommodating telescope shows us through the little end.

This is fortunate. It would be more fortunate if we did not abuse it by really believing in that illusion of the spyglass, only to be irritated by the monotony of time, wanting to hurry it up, in fact wanting but not quite daring to call time slow.

Four hundred and thirty-eight thousand two hundred and eighty-five . . . four hundred and thirty-eight thousand two hundred and eighty-four. . . .

Since we do not know exactly the number of hours and years left to us, we never dream of calling the hour just past a liability, but always speak of it as an asset. It is not an hour less that we have to live, but an hour more that we have lived.

Addition is an arithmetical process which tolerates and fosters hope, while subtraction cuts it brutally short. Subtraction is as neat and trenchant as the knife of the guillotine. From one hundred it snatches one hundred, finishes it off at a stroke, nothing left!

But what is to prevent us from carrying on an addition? There is no addition that can not be increased by another addition. $99 + 1 = 100$. $100 + 1 = 101$. $101 + 1 = 102$. And so on. Why not?

The feeling of continuity, a continuity that never stops, is so strongly rooted in us that it must correspond to a secret aspiration deep in our very being. . . .

When I was four years old, my nurse took me to

the ropemaker's on the road to Donzy-le-Pré. She had no trouble, being an imaginative girl, in making me believe that the man who was fashioning the strands of hemp would pull them out with his nimble fingers till he had drawn them well beyond Cosne and Montargis, clear around the world, that he would make a girdle which would go several times around the earth, as my father's silk muffler was wound round and round my neck when I had a cold.

At about the same period, I remember that I undertook a considerable job of excavating in the garden with a stick—a little stick that I pushed further and further into the ground, confident that this obstinate and unremitting labor would some day permit me to see, *on the other side,* those little Chinese whose souls I was busily redeeming by cutting the postage stamps off all the letters that came to the house.

A little later, when they had given me a box of building blocks as a New Year's gift, I dreamed that I might by sheer merit and exemplary conduct win a gift of twenty, of a hundred, of a thousand similar boxes of blocks with which I could build a house that should touch the sky.

And, good heavens, not long ago I was playing a game of billiards and I dreamed of making an uninterrupted series of perfect shots, trillions, quadrillions of perfect shots!

There lived next door to us, when I was a child, an old lady who had passed her ninety-fifth year. (I was told that she lived exclusively on grape-seeds and crackers like a parrot—poor parrot!) How anxiously I asked about her health every morning and how gladly I would then have given five years of my life to enable her to attain suddenly a hundred years, so that I might know a centenarian, might look at her in the flesh and not merely read about her in some newspaper, away off in Massachusetts!

To pile up years on top of each other seems rather like sleight of hand, like building a castle of cards or of dominoes, more and more complicated, higher and higher! One more domino! One more card! You hold your breath. You know—only the fun of the game comes from not knowing which—you know that one last domino, one last card will topple the whole thing to the floor. Slam-bang! Death. . . .

Life is a game. One does not live forever, of course, nor is one forever playing games. But we forget that in the excitement of the sport, otherwise we should not play and no doubt we should not live either.

Yes, indeed, life is a game. We say also that life is a journey—comparisons, metaphors, images which all imply the same transitory character, the

same precariousness. Why not say simply, then, that life is life, which is the best discovery yet made on the subject.

Moreover, isn't it a similar tautology that gives rise to the phrase so much in vogue, "to live one's own life"? Tautology, impropriety of language, and in truth absurdity. One does not live one's life. One lives, that's all.

Life is for everybody, just as sunshine is for everybody. To assert that you live your own life is like asserting that the sun sends out special rays for your own private benefit.

The embarrassed smoker who stops you on the road to ask for a light doesn't specify that you give him *your* special kind of fire. Put it this way: each of us has his box of matches, all of the same quality, the same brand. The difference is that all boxes do not contain the same number of matches, and we do not know exactly how many matches we have in our own box. Moreover, since we keep the burnt matches and put them carefully back in the box with the others, we do not know up to the last minute whether there are any more unburned matches left, or how many. When we shake the box, doesn't it always make the same sound? Then some evening when we least expect it we notice that all the matches we take from the box have already been used, so that we are left in the dark.

The only thing that experience ought to teach us is that no match-box has ever proved to be one of those magic boxes from which one can secure, whenever one wishes, an endless supply. . . .

As for knowing exactly the number of matches at the disposal of each of us, suppose we were to count them in advance? What folly that would be and what distress and anxiety it would cause! We would no longer dare to light one, or when we had lighted it we should wish to let it burn till it had scorched our fingers.

A match does not burn more or less quickly or more or less slowly. It burns and we burn like it. To speak of a "fast life" is to make use of a meaningless image. Whether we spend our time drumming on the window pane, twiddling our thumbs, spitting down a well, or whether we accomplish a thousand things, give free rein to all our passions and on top of that make a tour of the world, life is neither longer nor shorter. All these occupations, frantic or indolent, nomad or sedentary, all our activity or all our laziness, will use up exactly the same number of hours, minutes, and seconds.

I can't keep from smiling when I hear of the age of speed, when it is said that we live in the age of speed. The age of those cabs that we call "antediluvian" was already the age of speed compared to the age of the sluggard kings with their chariots drawn by oxen.

There is no such thing as pure speed. In consequence there is no speed, since it exists only as a function of time that never changes. We are like flies imprisoned in railway carriages. Whether the fly beats its wings or rests motionless against the window pane or the upholstery, the distance it travels will be the same and will be covered in the same time.

I should like to know whether in the age of speed there are fewer people who miss their trains and their appointments. Have you noticed that we dine later and later in proportion as we acquire more and more rapid means of locomotion to carry us to dinner?

The statement "I have time" is neither an excuse nor a pretext but only a profound truth, if we mean by it that there exists a constant and necessary relationship between time and whatever we do, that speed has nothing to do with the matter, nor has indolence, nor frenzied haste, nor a retreat into immobility. We always have time since actually it is time that possesses us.

A beginning, a middle, and an end, that is the inevitable order in which all the acts that make up our life, as well as life itself, develop. Only, in regard to life itself, no precise and certain sign warns us of the moment when we are nearer its end than its beginning. At fifty years of age, I do indeed

suspect that I am nearer the end than the beginning, but after all I have no formal assurance of it. I may add that I am not at all anxious for that assurance.

Besides, although we are as certain of having an end as that we have had a beginning, we are ignorant of one important fact, that is of what is the middle of our life. If I die next year, let us say, at the age of fifty-two, I should have considered my twenty-sixth year as the culminating point of my existence, and organized a life completely harmonious with this fact. I do not know whether this knowledge would have made me organize my life more harmoniously, but I do know that it would have poisoned the twenty-five years which I have lived since then, and which I would have thought of as my last twenty-five years.

"Short and good" can only be the statement of a balance, never a program—a testimony after death, a funeral oration and not a rule of life.

Neither can we take "Long and good" as our slogan, nor demand that life must be long in order to be good.

The truth is that life is good only on condition that we remain in ignorance of whether it will be short or long. The date of our death, granted the possibility of knowing it exactly, is the last thing we ought to ask of fortune-tellers and seers.

You know the story of the tuberculous young man

who was told that he had only a year to live. As he had just inherited five hundred thousand francs he lived, during that year, on the basis of a yearly income of five hundred thousand. At the end of which period he had to face the fact that he was not dead but ruined. Shortly thereafter he did die, not of tuberculosis but of destitution, and of despair that he had not been sufficiently tuberculous.

The false information had been furnished him not by a fortune-teller or a medium, but by a doctor. The predictions of doctors are called diagnoses; and certain doctors, like this one, consider that the more brutally they announce a diagnosis the more its scientific character is reinforced.

The fortune-tellers, who once upon a time wore the pointed hats of doctors, can flatter themselves that they are as scientific as doctors. This science of the future is after all only a branch of statistics. It rests entirely on the calculation of probabilities; and the cleverness or the malice of those who make a profession and a business of it consists in their understanding that there are only a limited number of hypotheses on which to base this calculation. Thus, as someone pointed out, when the weather prophet predicts rain for tomorrow he has one chance in two of making a mistake. Either it will rain or it will not rain.

Obviously life presents more possibilities than

that, but far fewer than we should like to believe. We believe—we like to believe—that there are all sorts of exceptional adventures waiting for us. "Such things happen only to me!" we proclaim with seeming despair, but secretly flattered.

Ah no! What happens to you has happened, is happening, and will happen to many others. A fortune-teller is simply a person who is convinced of the standardization, the rationalization of the future. His merit, his science—for they are one and the same—is to reduce life to the smallest number of the possibilities which it offers in all its provinces, to the minimum of different characters and events—a blonde woman, a dark man, a journey, a marriage, an inheritance.

While his predictions admit of more possibilities of error than the weather-man's, they profit, on the other hand, by what we call "imperfect enumeration." That is to say, if he makes a mistake, not one time out of two, but five times out of six, he will take advantage of that sixth time, when he has hit upon the truth, to make us forget the five other times, when he may have told us anything at all. And the impression produced by the lucky guess is so strong that it is in vain we tell ourselves it is only a chance, a coincidence. We may tell ourselves this, perhaps we may even shrug our shoulders to show that we are superior and sceptical, but at heart we are troubled.

I know that, personally, I am careful never to consult a fortune-teller. If he should predict me good fortune, I would hardly believe it; and as for the disagreeable things in his prophecy, I should not give them greater faith, but they would worry me. . . .

It is none the less true that the fortune-teller's method is excellent when he classifies his questions and goes right to the point, displaying the panorama of our lives in its largest outlines—health, love, riches—what more can you ask?

Why not adopt his method of classification, we who are trying to assemble in these pages, from among our observations, reflections, and memories, a certain amount of the material with which the fortune-teller builds the future? It is simple and convenient, and that is everything—everything which interests everyone, and not cooks and shop-girls alone.

If we are willing to examine ourselves sincerely —let us agree we shall—everything in life will lead back to the relations of the body and the soul, to business matters and to matters spiritual.

When, watching a falling star, or for the first time entering a church, you make three wishes (and what do you risk in wishing?) with the secret hope that they will come true, do you dream of asking for anything else? For my health and my family's,

for freedom from money worries, from emotional troubles and griefs.

The Art of Living is entirely contained in these three terms. It consists in seeking their realization, and also in adapting ourselves to their lack.

II. EATING AND EXERCISING

One cannot help regretting that the custom of funeral wakes or banquets is tending to disappear everywhere, except at country burials. Will you protest that for the most part and with most people there was no longer any thought of the dead by the time the dessert was reached? I hold rather that it was the thought of death that grew dim and distant, that became less imminent, terrifying and cruel, while our thoughts of the dead grew kinder and more hopeful.

What tender benevolence accompanies the end of a meal! I do not mean to imply that the stomach rules the heart, and I know nothing whatever of anatomy, but it is very seldom indeed that a satisfied stomach does not leave the heart reassured and quieted, ready for warm emotions and disposed to wide indulgence.

When I dine in public places, I never fail to follow the progress of my neighbors' menus as it is reflected on their faces and in their lively conversation. "To sit down at table," that time-worn, hackneyed expression, has it enough living significance when it implies so much . . . relaxation and confidence, forgetfulness of tomorrow and the banishment of every anxiety?

We do not sit down at table with those who are merely hacks, and it is while we are dining that we always speak most readily about our life, the secrets of our past and our plans for the future. Also, when a government wishes to keep informed of public opinion and of what is being said and plotted, it wisely chooses its favorite informers from among waiters and hotel stewards.

I notice the restaurants are advertising "business-men's lunches" that make a point of being short and hurried. What a mistake! The true business-man's lunch ought to encourage him who suggests a transaction to explain all its details and lead him who considers it to be delighted at its prospect.

How much pleasure and stimulation are lost by men who are in the habit of drinking large quantities of fine wines and of eating too abundantly and regularly of delicate food! The unfortunate fool who lingers until dawn, helping the girls of some night club to empty champagne bottles, will never know the delicious taste of the cup that is carefully filled and ceremoniously drunk for some family anniversary.

Satiety is our worst enemy. It would be well worth one's while to be deprived of many things so as to learn over again how to enjoy possessing them fully. Indeed, this thought should console us for everything we lack—the reflection that we shall

enjoy it all the more if we chance to acquire it some day.

The most delicious feast I can remember was a morsel of "bully beef" washed down with a quart of muddy and unsweetened coffee; but this was during the war and after a wait of more than twelve hours, spent crouching in the bottom of a hole under shell fire.

I have often marveled at the happy air of some poor devil on a park bench munching out of a newspaper heaven knows (I should not care to), what morsel of trash. And if I have not envied him it is because I have always had, thank God, a well enough behaved stomach. But I did reflect that I have not always seen this air of delight on the faces of persons seated before the flowers, caviar and fine glassware of a fashionable restaurant.

Have you ever noticed that in Europe you are most apt to hear singing in the third-class railway carriages? Naturally education and good manners tend to prevent the occupants of sleeping cars from being noisy in the corridors and from playing on cornets, accordions and horns. But aside from education and good manners, how evident it is that gaiety laughs at comfort . . . true gaiety, that which is called by the charming name of joyousness. For there is something wholesome and healthy about joy that is not merely a natural characteristic or a fortunate turn of mind—some-

thing that makes us like children or like well-nourished young animals—in fact, something animal or physical which for that very reason resembles a natural force and is eternal.

I am writing this book with a telephone on the table beside my ink-well and the plugs of a radio within reach of my hand. Has the art of living been simplified or complicated by these modern conveniences? Was the cave man, who had neither telephone nor radio, more or less expert than I in the art of living?

If the art of living means, as it is supposed to mean, the art of living happily, who can doubt that the joyousness which springs from a good appetite and a robust constitution was natural to the cave man, well-used, as he was, to killing bear and feasting on their raw flesh?

There are, of course, other sorts of happiness just as there are other ways of living, but this happiness is the foremost of them all because it is the only one that is self-evident, that cannot be disputed, that one wears, as cave men did, in one's face, and wins with the strength of one's biceps.

These men whom I see from my window, building a house on the other side of the street, whistle as they work. How I envy them, I who have always longed to be able to whistle at my work!

And in just this appears the superiority of manual workers over those who work with their brains;

our work does not harmonize with this joyous play of the lips . . . !

Besides, these fortunate fellows see exactly what they are doing, minute by minute, and can watch the progress of their work. They know exactly what point they have reached and where they are going. The task they have undertaken holds no disappointment for them and they can complete it without distress. They know that the house will be finished when they have put on the roof, and so they fasten a small flag or a bunch of flowers tied with bright ribbons to the ridge-pole.

Yes, indeed, I understand why they whistle; nothing troubles or disturbs them. Their materials are at hand, they see and touch these, they have tested their solidity.

The rest of us work in a fever of uncertainty. Shall we ever know if what we are creating will endure? We are building higher than they, but we risk discovery at any moment that we have built only on sand and nothing but castles of cloud. . . .

The same is true of the happiness for which we strive; there is so much uncertainty about its noblest parts, those that delight our hearts, those that satisfy our minds! Its only certain and solid elements are exactly those that make us whistle in fine weather, when we feel fit and supple as we take our bath; when, as we throw open our shutters in

the morning, we breathe in with the first ray of sunlight a whiff of pure, fresh air.

We underestimate these small, physical joys, the only ones on which we can really count. On the contrary, it would be wise to try to enjoy them to the full, so as to lose none of their value.

The small institute where I began my education made no pretense of nourishing our bodies as carefully as it trained our minds. I will not say that we suffered actual pangs of hunger, but certainly no one stuffed us or made a pretense of doing so.

Nevertheless, in that place a mere crust of bread gave me real pleasure, not because I was very hungry but because our professor of natural history had just taught us about "flavor" and had urged us to seek it in the foods we ate. So we had begun to chew our bits of bread slowly, as connoisseurs, and we had been astonished and delighted to find them so full of flavor, without our ever having noticed it. And it was another sensation when to the flavor of the bread we added the flavor of a few grains of salt which we had luckily thought of sprinkling over it.

At a period when the necessities of life were more plentiful and easier come by than they are today, it used to be a pleasant custom at the cafés in southern towns to fill a customer's glass twice in succession. The first time did not count, it was

for tasting, and the waiter invited you with cordial and imperious familiarity to "Taste! . . ."

Taste: I have often thought that was an excellent recommendation—and not only for liqueurs, and for many places besides the cafés of the south.

To savor something, to know how to savor it, to take pleasure in it, to savor one's little glass of liqueur, to savor one's pipe! In the very gesture of the man who smokes a pipe, in his very manner of holding and caressing the bowl, there is an expression of comfort, of security, of beatitude that is never given by the best cigar or the most perfumed cigarette. Those women who are so proud of smoking cigarettes will never be the true equals of men until they have boldly annexed the pipe.

But it is possible to imagine that men exist who do not smoke a pipe and who are nevertheless happy. We say to them, "You do not know what you are missing. . . ." They know that they miss first of all moments of nausea, a sticky mouth and a squeamish stomach. The saying goes that one must suffer in order to be beautiful, but is it absolutely necessary to suffer for the pleasure of smoking a pipe? Or if, as they say further, there is no pleasure without pain, should not one weigh in the balance the pain endured and the pleasure obtained?

Fortunate are the pipe-smokers, fortunate not so much for smoking a pipe as because it proves

they have good stomachs. It is a good stomach which gives them that air of genial expansiveness which is consecrated by the pipe.

Compare the cheerful end of a meal, when difficulties and anxieties no longer exist, when everyone is smiling and in harmony; compare the agreeable effect of a digestion that appears tranquil, of a well-disposed stomach, with that opposite state of affairs when, because our stomach has been upset and we have indigestion, we are cursed with insomnia and in this insomnia the horizon darkens, the least obstacle appears insurmountable and mole-hills become mountains.

How important it is to keep well if our lives are to be properly managed! Ah, do not let us laugh at those who fear above everything to fall ill! And let us pity those who believe they are always ill. To believe oneself ill is already a sign of illness.

But because health is normal to us and illness the exception we appreciate the supreme blessing of good health only on the day when ours becomes bad. Then we are upset: . . . "How wretched to be ill!" Yet we have never thought of exclaiming, as we should, "I am in good health, how delightful!"

And a cold in the head may make us forget months of robust health. In this way we can make ourselves quite wretched over a simple congestion in the nostrils.

They say there are mental tortures that surpass all physical suffering and demand a greater heroism from those who endure them.

For all that, we pity most the man who suffers physically, just as we reserve the height of our enthusiasm for the tenor rather than for the comedian. The comedian delights and disarms us with his jesting, but when the tenor finally utters his highest note we acclaim him because, like a gymnast or a juggler, he gives us the thrill of a *tour de force.* If it were permissible to use the expression in such a connection, I should say that it was more flattering to us to endure physical than moral suffering. The degree of endurance is seen more clearly and measured more exactly by the gallery. The young boy who expects to be cuffed for some piece of naughtiness (physical suffering) and gets out of it with even a severe scolding (moral suffering), thinks to himself, "Yes, but that didn't hurt."

Not that we cannot grow indifferent to physical suffering just as moral suffering may end by making us blasé. When we fell as small children and our mother picked us up, with scratched hands and bumps on forehead or knees, she used to say, "You will have forgotten all about it on your wedding day."

This had a double advantage, for the day of the nuptial benediction appeared to us wrapped in a con-

soling and rose-colored future, like that of all benedictions. It also taught us that time alleviates everything, settles everything, even scratches and bumps.

The minutes you pass under a surgeon's knife during some difficult and dangerous operation have, like other minutes, only sixty seconds each and for you as for others, "It is only a bad moment to be got through!" Nevertheless you are astonished that all life does not stand still at the instant when you go into the operating room. At least, you think, your friends will perhaps remember, "Why, isn't this the hour of the operation?" But later, when you date events from "the year of my operation" very few will be willing to follow your example by adopting this system of chronology.

Our common error, in this as in many other things, is to attribute an excessive importance to whatever happens to us, whether joy or sorrow, an excessive importance not only as these things affect ourselves (which may indeed be very important), but as they affect the rest of the world. Let us drop the habit of demanding that since we have a cold everyone about us, parents, friends, relatives, the man in the street, and the whole universe with them shall sneeze also.

The war had at least the advantage of reducing to their true proportions the ensemble of inconveniences and dangers that lie in wait for us. What we

lack most and what is most important under all circumstances is precisely a sense of relativity. And we acquire this sense in time of war because then we are forced to accept as a matter of course what until then was fortunately and correctly considered exceptional.

The extraordinary progress in aviation effected by the war was due to the fact that otherwise we should have gone on for a long time considering that it was very fine indeed and quite sufficiently dangerous merely to be up in the air. Then came the war to show aviators that merely being up in the air was nothing at all, that it was, in a way, beside the point, that it was simply their business. The point was to prevent others from staying up with them and to avoid being kept down themselves by bursting shells or machine-gun fire.

It is true that in a similar order of ideas—and this time along the neighborhood roads instead of on the heavenly highways—the fowls had not waited for the war to adapt themselves to new traffic conditions and to conclude that it actually would be absurd and old-fashioned to let themselves be run over by a horse or a bicycle or anything except an automobile.

Even when the choice was purely theoretical, we grew accustomed to choosing among war-risks, to deciding, for instance whether we should prefer to

lose an arm or a leg . . . a charming question to bring up!

Once the war was over, how was it possible for those who had preserved their four members not to appreciate more than ever their good fortune at being as whole and sound as before, after they had stated sincerely that they would be willing to return minus an arm or a leg if only they could actually return at all? Surely they would thank daily a gracious heaven which had canceled their account without exacting anything from them!

Peace has restored all infirmities to their normal rank, of course without their ceasing to be pitiful whether they have been demobilized or not. And we have begun again to wonder why one of the least of all infirmities, that of deafness, has perhaps the most regrettable effect on the character of those who suffer from it. However sad it is to be deaf, who would not agree that it is sadder to be blind? Yet it is always true that a deaf man is more irritable than a blind man and that of the two it is he who supports his misfortune with the least patience and with none of that peaceful, sometimes even smiling serenity that is so admirable in the blind.

Have we then so urgent a need to hear what is said around us? Yes, so as to know what is said about us. What makes the deaf so gloomy and somber is the feeling that they are out of touch with things and that they can exercise no surveil-

lance or control over what is said concerning them.

Very seldom would you take advantage of a blind man because he could not see you—except at a certain age and in a certain walk of life, when you may have made faces at one or stuck out your tongue at him. It is far less certain that a man who could not hear them, because he was deaf, would never be greeted with unkind words or saluted with sorry jokes accompanied by abusive or even mocking comments.

Our fear of ridicule springs from a general and only too familiar tendency of ours to ridicule everything. That is why we are most sensitive to those physical accidents which are most obvious. Even though it scarcely inconveniences us, we suffer far more severely from a pimple on the nose than from many real afflictions.

It even causes us more distress to have a pimple on the nose than to have a crooked nose.

That is because we seldom consider the way our nose or the rest of us is fashioned. "We never see those whom we love as they really are," says the proverb; or rather we love ourselves more than anyone else in the world . . . the only excuse, in many cases, for our eagerness to exhibit ourselves.

How explain otherwise the frightful exhibition that so many men and women, even in the highest ranks of society, make of themselves when nothing obliges them and no one wishes them to do so?

I am thinking just now of the spectacle we offer during the season at the fashionable beaches. Lay aside all questions of modesty and decency. It is quite evident that if we appeared in the street as we appear at a ball, and at a ball as we appear while bathing, the benches of correction would be far too short for so many bacchantes and satyrs.

But decency and modesty apart, how explain the complacent display of all these monstrous or meager anatomies?

One is forced to believe that we are more indulgent in the case of our bodies than in the case of our souls, since at least during the summer at the seashore we take such scant pains to conceal our physical blemishes, although there is no place or season when our moral blemishes are not carefully sheltered from indiscreet investigation.

Imagine that, instead of bodies in short drawers and clinging tights, hearts and souls were revealed so nakedly. . . .

I have occasionally wondered if the movement of the tides could not be explained as a sudden disgust felt by the sea for those who bathe or prepare to bathe along its beaches. The sea withdraws because after a certain time, always the same, it is seized with nausea. It has indeed seen too much and can no longer endure the spectacle. It returns, however, once its disgust is over, because all is forgotten and habit triumphs over every-

thing. But if it were to see certain souls and not merely their envelopes, who knows if it would ever return?

You take great pains to beautify your body and make it more graceful. You submit it to severe discipline, you uncomplainingly go through a whole series of monotonous and exact movements to develop your chest and to strengthen and limber up your arms and legs.

I see you every morning consecrating a more or less lengthy period to your Swedish exercises, but when would you exercise your soul like this to improve or beautify it? Has no one ever suggested Swedish gymnastics for the soul?

I have said that a good appetite disposes one to gaiety, that the cast of our thoughts, the tendency of our minds corresponds, for the most part, to the condition of our spleen, our liver or our lungs. Let us care for our lungs and liver, let us watch over our spleen and stomach, but let us also watch over our souls which, granted organisms of virtue, remain the only mistresses and dispensers of our happiness.

Let us strive for gaiety, even if we have lost all appetite for it. Let us try to suppress the control that the body exercises over the spirit and, without neglecting any opportunity for letting our body develop to its full strength, let us try to render the spirit always stronger. When a ship moves all its

parts move with it. If our affairs are no longer going well, or are going badly or are scarcely getting on at all, what does it matter so long as the soul progresses?

I once knew a man who spent the last ten years of his life in bed, crippled with pain. Towards the end, he even became blind, yet he did not curse either man or life but remained until his last day good, kind and joyous. Yes—do you understand? —gay, and he who would allow no one about him to be sad. This was because he had managed to break any connection between his spirit, his will, and his miserable organs. His soul was exalted to another plane and purified and ennobled to the point where it was not influenced by his suffering body.

This man who lived like a sage died like a saint, and if I cite his example it is not, after all, with the thought that either you or I will imitate him but rather with the hope that we shall neither of us have to imitate him.

The life of the saints, compared to the Art of Living, is as the career of a Marshal of France likened to the science of an unarmed soldier. I am, no doubt, quite bold enough in trying to write on the Art of Living and in hoping that my book will be read. But were I to write an art of living for the saints, where should I find readers?

The saints know their own business and do not wait for advice from me.

III. THE VIRTUES OF GETTING OLD

Although we have often wished it, we have never chanced to be so situated in a rainstorm that if we stretched out our arms in opposite directions we could have had one hand wet and the other dry.

It is as impossible to fix the exact moment when old age begins as it is to find the exact spot where it starts to rain.

Only the heroes of novels grow old in a night and awake with white hair.

It is true that, when war was declared, some man who was hiding his age from the civil government often decided suddenly to confess and, revealing an age we should never have suspected—so vigorous he seemed only yesterday—became old overnight, losing the matchless elasticity of his step and the marvelous grace of his body on the first day of mobilization. But to bring this about, there was required a world upheaval, the fervor of patriotism, and no doubt also a desire that the world should understand why one delayed a little about rushing to the front. Only government administrations pretend to establish a sort of barrier

of age for the retirement of their functionaries, and even this has something arbitrary about it or at least a certain fluctuation, for apparently a colonel grows old more rapidly than a general and a state councilor less quickly than a prefect.

The theater, which, if it does not show us life itself, always gives us the most perfect reflection of life as we see it, has allowed us to watch astonishing variations in the ideas we form of old age. Once we saw a man of forty treated as a grey-beard, whereas the most recent plays represent such a man as the exact type of the young premier. These variations undoubtedly were influenced by the age of the author of the play or by that of the actor who interpreted it, but they correspond especially well to the relativity that characterizes all measurement of time, and age is such a measurement. No doubt we put off the date of old age as we advance in life. When we were twenty, how weighed down with years the man of fifty seemed to us, how decrepit and hoary! But at forty a man confidently expects ten good years more, and even sixty does not seem the height of decay to the man of two-score and ten.

Does not that old lady of ninety continue to refer to her son, aged seventy-one, as her "child"?

Boys in the eighth grade, no higher than your arm, call one another "old fellow." But this ex-

pression is more common among school boys than among professors in the better universities.

It is a rule among reporters when they are writing up various news items—a man has been knocked down by a bull or found hanged in an outhouse—that they are never to use the expression "old man," even though the man in question has passed his seventy-fifth year. In the newspaper you say "a man of seventy-five," never "an old man of seventy-five." Were he fifteen years older, still there would be no such thing as an old man to a well-bred journalist, aware of what he owes to the public.

Suppose you are discussing the age of a certain actress. You examine the year-books and dictionaries, you invoke the testimony of your grandparents, seeking to prove that she is actually twenty years older than she says on the assumption that she will be thought ten years younger than she is. What a shabby wish! How much better to declare that the fair are ageless just as the brave are timeless.

Or if it is true that she has pleased you for many long years and still tries to do so and, best of all, still succeeds, instead of seeming to reproach her for such charm and such enduring attraction, instead of mocking her touching efforts and her amazing accomplishments, would it not be better to present her age to her as a bouquet? And if indeed you

prove she is older let it be only to admire her the more.

The great merit of youth, indeed! . . . Is it not even more admirable to stay young than merely to be so?

Among the thousand charms of Ninon de l'Enclos, the only one recorded by history is that of her delightful old age. It was not her charm that made Ninon famous but the age at which she was still charming.

Who has said that if instead of being condemned to death one were allowed to compete for the privilege there would be a surplus of candidates?

I remember my impatience to attain the age of eighteen, and my pride when I had done so, because I knew that from the day when one is eighteen one is "marriageable."

The trouble with old age is that it lacks any special legal qualification. One ought to become old as one becomes marriageable or eligible or a voter.

Old age is not within the reach of everyone, and the mortality statistics are there to prove it. It is neither very easy nor very common to become old, yet does not everyone desire to accomplish it? Why then should we require pulling by the ear to make us admit we have succeeded? It is because we

should have liked to grow old without having aged. . . .

First to be willing to age, next to know how to age!

We are never the first to notice that we have aged, but others notice it. Most of them say nothing about it, or if we tell them we are no longer young they know it is only in the hope that they will deny it vehemently.

But the very day when we expect it least, when we are certain that our legs are as good as when we were twenty and that we are as spry as a very young man, that very day some motor-cyclist will shout at us, because we get out of the way of his machine too slowly to please him, "Hey there, old timer! . . ."

The common error is to consider old age only in the light of the blessings of which it deprives us, without ever taking into account those that it never fails to bring us.

It seems as if we advanced into life backwards, our eyes obstinately fixed upon our youth.

We face old age as we might face a door that opened outwards and which we obstinately desired to have open inwards. We hesitate, nervous and anxious. We shiver with impatience. The years pass, and this chamber of old age, which our clumsiness and ill grace prevent us from entering

boldly, do you imagine that it, too, is not full of treasures that we may enjoy and that we shall never have time even to examine?

We speak off-hand of a "respectable number of years," but it is sad to see those who have attained this number so little respected, even when they are respectable. Whose fault is it?

This father of a family flatters himself that he is respected by his sons so long as he is able to run as fast as or faster than they, to swim as well or even better, to defeat them or merely hold his own against them in a game of tennis or a fencing match.

But is it a good idea to try to assert our superiority over young people in their own especial field? Do we respect anyone whose chief effort we know is to resemble us?

We laugh at the old coquette, with her childish affectations and ridiculous finery, at the old dandy who lets himself be misled by a lying and clever tailor with his promise to "make him look young."

But are not this old coquette and this old dandy the very image of that old age which bewails and conceals itself, as a sign of its eternal regret?

One should never regret what is irreparable. When you have scooped up water in your palm from a fountain, try to drink all you can as quickly as possible, but do not hope to retain it always between your closed fingers for when it has slipped

through them to the ground you will never pick it up again. . . .

We complain that so many young people are badly brought up. But how are they brought up and by whom?

If old men were not so often disreputable old fellows and if elderly women did not have the manners and appearance of little girls—or little idiots —then, but only then, I should feel indignant that they were allowed to stand in the subway.

Perhaps it is because the Academy does not admit women that it refuses to put the feminine form of *old person* into the dictionary; or perhaps it is because of a strange gallantry in our language. But we Frenchmen have the expression *beau vieillard* and if we do not speak of *belles vieillardes* we recognize, venerate and salute most respectfully these touching and admirable old ladies of another generation.

You see, we cannot help referring to the past. Suppose that the women of today have indeed discovered some secret for growing old more slowly. Still they grow old just as surely with their necks clipped as they once did under their crowns of white hair. What a pity that they have resigned that crown!

We consider the fashions of our grandmothers amusing, and from preference or in a spirit of jest we take out of our cupboards the trinkets with which

they surrounded themselves and the ornaments they used for adornment. We bring the furnishing of their boudoir down from the attic, the *bonheur-du-jour* of their bedchamber, their extra chairs, couches and ottomans. With their curtains and draperies we carefully re-create the setting in which they lived. But we are very careful not to live as they did. Surely the same atmosphere suits the same customs? Surely it is paradoxical and extravagant to use a Louis-Philippe card table for a game of *belote!*

But we are no longer even surprised at the odd figure made by the plaster shepherds—standing in the court at the foot of the front steps or at the entrance of the stable which has been transformed into a garage—who receive the short-skirted ladies as they descend from their automobiles, playing their flutes as they have done from the time of Napoleon III.

Is it because they hope to resemble Edison that so few old men still consent to wear the long, white beards that used to be considered the especial prerogative of old age? A long white beard does not prevent us from telephoning.

White beards, crowns of white hair, black, or grey frock coats, long dresses with trains . . . all the material appearances of old age have been suppressed with infinite pains. People wish no barriers,

no frontiers, to exist between old age and youth.

But the absurd idea that falsifies everything is that any barrier could exist between just these two things: *entrance forbidden . . . exit forbidden.*

When youth dances, old age does not watch it from behind locked bars; yet that is no reason why portly matrons and panting senators should rush into dancing themselves.

Sympathy does not necessarily imply imitation and we do not need to repeat ourselves something we have understood in order to prove our understanding.

Let us who are older strive to understand the young and not to break the bridge between them and us. But after all, it is they, not we, who will have to cross that bridge. In spite of statements to the contrary, it is the young Mohammeds who go to the mountain, not the mountain to the young Mohammeds.

We have settled down in our old age like those owners of modest homes in the suburbs whose simple pride makes them build a cupola on their humble house where it stands among all the other little houses. No horizon is visible from this cupola, but once seated there, they imagine they can look far and wide.

And they have taken especial pains to fit it up with panes of glass colored red, yellow, or blue, so that as you look through one glass or another, the

landscape appears to you, with the help of a little imagination, as bathed in a light that corresponds to the different hours of the day or even to the different seasons, so that it seems covered with winter snow or drenched in summer sunshine. In this way the inhabitant of the cupola may imagine that he creates winter or summer at his pleasure.

The same is true of old age. We do not acquire a view merely because we have built a cupola, nor wisdom and experience merely because we have reached the summit of our years. Strong with this pretended wisdom, from the height of this simulated experience that is assured by our many-colored glasses, we wish the young men and women about us to resemble our own winter or we try to color this winter with the hues of summer.

Old man, come down from your cupola, leave your colored glasses. Mingle on foot with the young so that they may see you as you are and you may see them as they are. Let there be neither hostility nor deceit, neither boasting nor masquerade between you. The torch of the runner of antiquity had to pass from hand to hand. If you hold it too high or too far off you will have to throw it to them to catch. And in that case, you risk either putting it out or setting everything on fire.

But the torch race is not a carnival dance. There is no need for the old to assume the mask of youth or to think themselves exactly like the young. Or

if it is not a race but a dance they should let it whirl about them without wishing either to interrupt it or to take part in it. They should not say, "I will whirl about with you," but, "I used to whirl about as you are doing." Above all, they should never say, "I used to whirl better than you."

This sort of regret is really constant and uncritical praise of the past and one must beware lest it become bitterness. Why be harsh with the young because of what you did not do when you were young and what you cannot do now that you are old?

On the contrary, ought you not to rejoice that the young are there to carry on what you began, to accomplish what you undertook, to complete your work?

The noblest image of old age, the classical image, is that of the oak raising towards heaven its branches that grow ever greener and sturdier. Can we imagine the roots being jealous of the branches, or the branches jealous of the leaves that unfold thanks to those very branches? Everything in the same tree shares in the same life, springs from the same trunk and is quickened by the same sap.

But I am quite aware that this is less the image of old age in general than of the old man who is surrounded and continued by his children and grandchildren, since the branches spring from the oak.

And here I wish to speak my mind frankly and say that in my opinion only children and grandchildren give old age its value and plenitude, its true significance and continuation.

I hold that no one ought to regret growing old, but I admit that at times it is necessary to force oneself a little to find an excuse for it, as they say.

But to grow old when you have children, how simple and easy it all becomes! Do you not instantly recover in them whatever you regret having lost yourself? You grow old but they grow up.

It even seems better not to have realized all your ambitions, all your dreams, so that you may leave the field freer to them.

We console ourselves for having lacked genius by thinking how perilous it is to be the son of a great man. We have stopped short in the middle of the ladder. Well, so much the better. The child whom we support, whom we push ahead of us, will climb the other rungs. If we had climbed them all ourselves he might not have been able to maintain himself on the very top where we should have left him. Or he might have leaped forward, but towards what? In any case, he would have felt dizzy.

The genius of Victor Hugo allowed him to write "The Art of Being a Grandfather," but made him the least apt of men to realize this art.

Without priding myself on being able to reform

the language, I find it strange to call those who come after us our "descendants." Do we not, on the contrary, desire them to be ascendants? And in proportion as they rise, it is we who descend, right to the tomb.

What a touching sight is an old gardener, broken with age and with hard daily labor, who still goes on enthusiastically and carefully watering his slips and seedlings! He knows that his rounded back will never again be straight, or his worn and wrinkled face be bright and fresh, and his greatest joy is to bring freshness and growth to his plants, to see the leaves and flowers, wilted by dust and the hot sun, revive. What a fine thing it would be for a gardener to die with his watering pot in his hand!

I like the grandfather who re-learns the rudiments of Greek and Latin so as to hear his grandson recite them. He should not, however, feel obliged to learn the tango or the fox-trot so as to dance them with his granddaughter, nor launch into lengthy dissertations to prove to her the superiority of the one-step, or the two-step, or the old-fashioned waltz over the hesitation waltz.

Let us try to draw close to our children through everything that tightens the lines of tradition, and let us prudently hold aloof from all that does not belong to this tradition. Tradition is a chain around which fashion twines its ephemeral and fragile garlands. Let us not be irritated by the garland,

nor so angry that we wish to cut it forcibly. With the same clumsy and brutal snip of the scissors we risk severing the chain.

It is indispensable, they say, that everyone should make his own contribution, the young as well as the old. However useful the maintenance of tradition may be to young people, let the old remember that it is no less necessary to themselves. Indeed, tradition is their reason for existence. If we make the tradition we represent appear so exacting and uncompromising, so disagreeable and uncomfortable, that those who come after us persuade themselves that it is better to give it up and do without it, to simply discard it, we shall grow old alone.

Grow old alone? . . . I ought rather to say grow old in complete isolation! To feel we have nothing in common with those who come after us, with the young life that flows about us but draws back from us rather than surrounds us . . . that is indeed to grow old painfully and cruelly.

But quite evidently we shall have had our share in this pain and cruelty; no doubt we were the first to offend through pride and obstinacy, through lack of understanding and indulgence.

Indeed, if life has not taught the old to be indulgent, it has taught them nothing. All our lives we are aware of how difficult it is to harmonize tastes, minds, and characters. And when to these differences there is added the difference of age,

shall we then insist that the young must think and act like the old and that the old shall decide and rule in everything?

Have you ever observed that what the old tend to criticize first and most severely in the young is their way of entertaining themselves? Let us not seem to resent these amusements because we are no longer able to amuse ourselves.

It is a great pity to see this vain irritation of the old and to watch them waste the little tenderness that remains to them in useless and disproportionate indignation.

For this also must be admitted, that old age does not always progress without physical decay or without intellectual or moral weakening. Not always. There are fine old men who preserve all their faculties to their last breath, in whom the flame goes out all at once without having ever flickered.

Dangerous and disturbing examples! Which is the exception, which is the rule? We know that winter will bring us cold, ice and snow, nevertheless we may always hope for an old age without infirmity.

They speak of the self-protecting egoism of the old. Alas, it is like the precaution and egoism of the wretch who is to be guillotined the next day and who, having caught cold on the eve of his execution, spends his last night drinking medicine and sucking cough drops. . . .

IV. THE ANNOYANCE OF DEATH

Well, yes, let us dispose right away of this question of death, let us free ourselves from its obsession, since we cannot utter or write the word *life* without having the word *death* written in transparency beside it—without having its name resound immediately in our ears, like an echo.

Whoever says *life* says *death,* and whatever we say of life will immediately be twisted about so that the face of death as we imagine it will appear in it, until it will resemble those picture puzzle-plates, with their laboriously and naïvely complicated designs, where one seeks in the simple landscape for the hat of the policeman or the whiskers of the game-warden.

Does the art of living lie in thinking constantly of death, or in never thinking of it? These are the two schools of thought and I have no hope of settling the matter by a third elegant solution—*i.e.,* that death may appear to you like those persons of whom one thinks when one sees them. No, you must make up your mind, either constantly or not at all. . . .

There are some evils that exist only because people think of them. But in so far as dying is concerned, one need not worry. Whether you think of death or not it will come to you just the same. Accordingly it seems to me better to think of it all the time so as to learn to think familiarly of it.

It may be objected that this is impossible, that the idea of death is enough to spoil and ruin the taste for life. But why should it? We persist in thinking of life and death as of two inveterate enemies, constantly pitted against each other. But they do not combat: they exclude each other, which is not at all the same thing. They are never found together and consequently cannot contend and injure each other. They do not know each other. The dessert is not the enemy of the soup, and the final glass that is brought at the end of a meal is not treated as a personal enemy by the fish that appeared as the first course. It is as absurd for us to feel any more anger or fear at death than the actors in a theater feel for the scene-shifter who will lower the curtain on the last act. But the scene-shifter will not lower the curtain until the play is ended; death will not, either, but life is a play of which we do not know when it will be finished until the end. . . .

A scene-shifter is not a terrible person. Yet it seems as if we have enjoyed picturing death with the most hideous features, fastening a frightful mask

over it and making it the most horrible and terrifying of bug-bears. Why have we done this?

The value of a bug-bear is to frighten away those whom we wish to terrify. Do we wish to frighten ourselves away from death? But our dearest wish would be to get rid of it if we might; there is no need of a bug-bear for that.

When you offer a child a spoonful of cod liver oil, do you also make faces at him, not to make him laugh but to frighten him?

To try to frighten ourselves with what we cannot escape is not very clever.

We behave towards Death as if it were not really inevitable, as if in our hearts we felt sure of possible immortality. Otherwise, why have we given Death a personality? Why write Death with a capital D? We crystallize about Death a whole ensemble of sinister details. All the most frightful things we can imagine go to make up its image. Why this necessity for a concrete image of Death? Do we ever try to make an image of Birth, which is quite as redoubtable a mystery? Only in the revues, towards the end of the year, does a young person, more or less unclad, advance towards the prompter's box to say to a companion, "As for me, I am the Dénouement!" . . .

It is senseless, when we think of death, to evoke a grim face and withered arms, a sickle, an hour-glass, skulls and tibias along with the noise of rat-

tling bones. What rings the funeral knell? The same bells that announce morning prayer, that ring for baptisms and marriages. . . .

Let us first rid the idea of death of all its romantic trappings. After all, this is not impossible. Do we not speak of death without the least sadness or fright so long as the term is one used in a game?

There is no doubt that one can grow familiar with the idea of death and with death itself. The medical students in the hospitals are the proof of it, those students whose jokes are legendary, just as the jokes of the undertaker's men are legendary, as is the truculent gaiety of the church choristers who intone the *De Profundis* in voices that never tremble.

Nor do I believe that this is just an attitude or that their joy is feigned, like the courage of those who whistle the chorus of a song between their clenched teeth when they skirt a cemetery wall at night.

No, it is quite true that one grows entirely accustomed to the idea of death and to death itself. But, I must admit, it is the death of others.

This is especially evident during an epidemic or a war, when one ends by watching men fall about one without troubling to pick them up.

Here as elsewhere matters are ruled by the law

of supply and demand: too many apples are on the market—so many lives are risked that they lose their value.

When a fireman, seeking to save an old man in a blazing upper story, becomes himself the prey of the flames, falls to the ground and is killed, it is right that he should be given posthumous honors and that his heroism should be praised in all the papers. Yet in wartime, who would think of talking of his exploit or of praising his death among the thousands and thousands of daily deaths? Yet he would have been no less brave and would have deserved it no less.

Always that idea of relativity, from which nothing escapes, not even death.

Yes, our own death does.

We see that everything is always relative, and the direst trouble, unhappiness, or suffering that goes to make up the world, appears of small importance once it is past.

This is true even of the death of those dear to us, though it ought to trouble our days and nights forever after. Our grief is certainly real, sincere and deep, but who could affirm in good faith that the overwhelming sorrow of the first hour persists or that at the end of a more or less long period he no longer thought of anything but his grief?

Nine times out of ten we need only lay aside the questions that harass and worry us. The famous

postman who sorted his letters by throwing them all unopened into a drawer and leaving them there for three months, was perhaps not so dull after all. So few letters, even those that would have seemed the most important and urgent, are worth a reply after three months!

Only death, our own death, has never shared the benefits of what might be called this ostrich-like policy. In fact, it is only our own death that cannot be put to the test of such an experiment. Concerning it we have no way of finding out whether we do right or wrong to attach such importance to it. Only our own death, in its relation to ourselves, escapes from the consoling principle of relativity.

It is a good idea to begin by softening the terms of a certain number of ready-made expressions, such as "death lies in wait for us," . . . "to brave death," for they falsify the elements of a problem that is already sufficiently complicated and difficult.

We do not brave death, unless after the fashion of Don Quixote when he hurled himself against the windmills. We brave danger or suffering—that is, we try to persuade ourselves that we brave them—but we no more brave death than we brave the results of a problem in arithmetic. It will always be as futile to brave death as to try to

prove that two and two make five. That is not heroism, it is absurdity.

The confusion springs from the fact that we always add the idea of physical suffering to the idea of death. This suffering is what we wish to brave and all heroism, such as we represent it, consists in braving it.

Actually we identify physical suffering with death to such an extent that we cannot think of one without thinking of the other also, and our fear of death is first of all a fear of suffering. We do indeed say of such or such a man that he "died without suffering," but are we ever sure? The doctors say so, but they did not try it themselves.

At the very most, we think we know whether this suffering was long or short. We judge it according to quantity not quality. Shall we ever know the quality of a second of suffering, or of that thousandth or ten-thousandth part of a second which is the interval between life and death—that in which a living man changes into a dead one—an interval for which there exists no common measure, no indication as to quantity, an interval that cannot be written down?

Goethe affirmed that a man never died who has not in his heart consented to death. That is, we die when we give up life and because we give it up. But this does not mean that we choose the hour of our death. It simply means that at a cer-

tain moment the will to live finds itself dominated by a stronger will. Then we turn our noses to the wall; it is over, we give up. Death never wins from a knock-out, it wins on points.

Once more the expression is erroneous. Death does not triumph. It has no need to triumph; life failed. It would be more exact to say that death doesn't exist, for it is only a modification of life, it is the instant when life is altered, ceases, or is continued elsewhere.

Can you any longer pretend that death lies in wait for us? You might as well assume that the bronze automatons which strike out the hours above the floor of the Merceria, in the Place San Marco at Venice, wait and watch impatiently each day until it is noon! Neither does the station-master begin at eight o'clock every morning to wait impatiently for the passage of the express at 10:35. Death is on hand, as the little Venetian automatons are on hand to sound noon, as the station-master is on the platform when the train passes. It does not lie in wait for us; it has no need to. We shall not die without it, nor shall we live forever without its intervening on the way.

Besides, do you believe that if death had that personality which we attribute to it and which it does not possess, it would have nothing to do but occupy itself constantly with us? The terror which death inspires in us and our preoccupation

with it spring from our extraordinary vanity. For us, there exist ourselves and death. If the Pope should die we should share in the general mourning, but our own death is what really matters.

If we wish to accustom ourselves to the idea of our own death, as we well know we are accustomed to the death of others, it is absolutely necessary for us to realize that, after all, our death is of no more importance than other deaths.

But it is much more important to us? Not even that. Our death important! But in relation to whom and to what? In relation to ourselves? How is that possible when we shall no longer be here to judge of it? We judge the importance of our death as if it were a part of our life, as if it were one of the events in the course of our life and on the same footing as the other events.

Admitted! But at least, let us not be proud of it. For it only means that we meet death as an obligation somewhat more absorbing than beginning our military service, as an examination simply more difficult, indeed a good deal more difficult than the baccalaureate.

This is mere vanity—in both meanings of the word: the vanity of death which reveals to man his "fragility," his "nonentity." These are the words given by the dictionary, under "vanity," and it adds, moreover, "desire to shine, to make a

show." And does not our death testify to this other vanity also?

What means, I ask you, this desire to regulate our funerals in their smallest details? "Neither flowers nor wreaths" we specify, and never seem to notice the tragi-comedy of our insistence. Neither flowers nor wreaths . . . what difference can it possibly make to us?

It is like the feeling we have for certain little country cemeteries. How pleasant to lie there!

This phenomenon is much like the anthropomorphism against which we struggle so clumsily when we think of the Deity. When we consider death or the dead we never succeed in forgetting our preoccupations, tastes, and preferences as living persons. When we suppose the dead must lie at peace in that little country cemetery, so solitary and shady, we attribute to the dead the feelings and impressions of the living who may come there to visit them.

In the same way, we utter epilogues—"I should like to die after this or that fashion." One does not die like either this or that. One just dies, and our thoughts, our preferences, and our tastes have nothing at all to do with it. Suicide itself is not a manner of death, it is a way of living or, if you prefer, of no longer living. It is not an evidence of will but of impatience.

I am not the first to compare the behavior of a suicide to that of Gribouille. But when Gribouille flung himself into the water he was thinking only of escaping the rain. Like Gribouille, the man who rushes to his death is thinking only of the cares that rain about him.

It is like calling Gribouille a prince of the intelligence with a genius for initiative, to pretend that it takes courage to kill oneself. Between the act of suicide and such an idiotic judgment there intervenes, as there always does in the case of death, whether voluntary or not, the idea of physical suffering. This is a subject to which I must return, as I cannot denounce too often the persistence of this idea.

The pretended courage applies here to the revolver shot, to the razor cut, and not at all to death, the "liberating" death that will result—as liberating, for that matter, as the river water which delivered Gribouille from the rain.

But you may complain, "I love life so dearly!" . . . and you think that a love of life makes you fear death. You are wrong. On the contrary, you should love life to the point of not fearing death; you should love life even in death. Are you going to leave untouched the delicious liqueur that fills your glass because, no matter how large the glass may be, it is not inexhaustible?

No, you will empty your glass, with a thousand

epicurean precautions, to the last drop. After the last drop it is empty, after the last moment there is death. Life, like the liqueur, is all the better and more full of flavor for being carefully savored.

In the windows of humble village groceries one still sees those mysterious little cones of varicolored paper at which the boys, fresh from school, stare with delighted and longing eyes. They are called "surprises," and when you have undone the paper cone you find a paper wrapper within and another within that and at the bottom of the last paper perhaps a little lead ring and a few bits of sugared nuts. . . . If you offered these very schoolboys a few rancid nuts and a little lead ring in exchange for their two sous, would they have these flushed cheeks and hands trembling with expectancy?

We should love life as the village urchins love surprises, without troubling about what is at the bottom of the paper, in the tip of the cone. How many of us confess that we like to receive packages because we enjoy undoing the wrappings? Our life lies before us like a well-tied-up package. Let us taste the pleasure of undoing the wrappings.

There is the same difference between life and death that there is between a tied parcel and a parcel undone, but there is always the same string.

I have never forgotten a young lad who, during the first month of the war, was watching a civilian

burial as it came out of the Church of the Madeleine. I heard him murmur, as the hearse passed, "That fellow in there sure didn't have much curiosity! . . ."

It remains to be seen whether death does not indeed throw open to our curiosity even wider fields than the vicissitudes of war. But that is another matter.

Our curiosity about life will always soften the agony of death. Have you ever noticed what a frenzy agitates the little day-flies which during the twenty-four hours, forty-eight at most, granted them by nature seem eager not to lose a minute or a second? We were born this morning, we shall die this evening, meanwhile let us keep on dancing! . . .

Ah, the brevity of existence does not make them neurasthenic! . . . But then they are only insects. Yet compared to time and the universe, are we ourselves much more than day-flies? Vanity of vanities! Monsieur Perrichon had no need to mount to Sirius (as did Monsieur Renan) to prove that from the top of Mont Blanc or the Mer de Glace (which is not even as high as Sirius) man appears very small indeed. So much for our petty vanity! But as for our proud vanity, have you ever reflected what would be left, viewed from Sirius, or even from the Mer de Glace, of our great

funeral processions, of the waving plumes, the troops that line the road on the passage of some personage, and of the Pantheon itself? Even the Pantheon would not seem very high, viewed from the Mer de Glace or from Sirius. Perhaps it might even appear comical. . . .

It is remarkable that death, which ought at least to teach us modesty, so often serves as a pretext for these exhibitions of pride. When a man, from a love of antithesis, chooses as a supreme and final honor the hearse of the poor, does he imagine that all the dead are not poor men indeed?

They speak of equality in death. Do you suppose that this equality does not begin before the funeral exercises? There is no social rank in death that corresponds to the social rank in funerals. . . .

If we took a somewhat loftier view of death, all these affectations would disappear, as well as the ridiculous, misplaced ornamentation that surrounds it. At the same time, certain ignoble visions that freeze the heart with horror would disappear also. A flutter of dead leaves, whirling in the autumn wind, has nothing fearful about it as we watch it from a terrace. It is even a very touching, pretty, and poetic sight. The ugliness begins with the gardener's broom—the ugliness and sadness when, after having gone down for a last, melancholy walk you stumble over those little heaps of dead and rotting leaves, lying close to some wall, which they

will presently carry away in a wheelbarrow to the compost heap or the bonfire. . . .

I cherish the memory of a certain All Saints' Day when along the paths of a southern cemetery that overlooked vast vineyards, golden as the sun or red as wine—that blue line on the horizon was the sea—along the alleys marked through the tombs by the noble rows of cypresses, a long line of little orphans, in plain, school-girl frocks, led by nuns in their white headdresses, moved singing canticles or reciting "Ave Marias." . . . It was not sad. There was a sort of ingenuous calm, a great consolation in the concert of thin, childish voices that seemed to be learning to talk quietly with the dead, to be undisturbed in the face of death.

Suddenly the good sister who walked at the head of the line made a frightened gesture and hastily turned her little troop back into another line of march. At the end of the path a number of people were grouped about an open grave where a coffin had been raised to the level of the ground. A workman was unscrewing the cover and there was all the lugubrious setting of an exhumation. . . .

The good sister was right to turn her orphans aside. There are other things than that in death. Death is not that any more than the compost heap is the dead leaf, and one can think of death without thinking of that.

To reassure us, they say that death is a sleep. All the more reason for not associating with death images that will prevent us from sleeping.

No falsehoods or romantic fabrications, none of those macabre fancies and embellishments, but a quite ordinary, simple and natural idea of death! Death is evidently a tiresome necessity, but life is full of these necessities and annoyances about which one is forced to think and which cannot be suppressed by being ignored. Yet I will not hide from myself that, after all, it is of small avail for us to try to be sensible and to produce all these excellent reasons; we should prefer to think of something else. "I am not afraid to die," my friend protested, "I am not afraid to die but it would annoy me. . . ."

Besides, there is the immortality of the soul and then there is God. . . . But as I said, that is another story and we shall have a chance to speak of it again. . . .

V. AUTOMOBILES FOR EVERYONE

You console yourself for not having much money, but never tell me that you would be inconsolable if you had too much. The important thing is to know how to be satisfied with our lot, whether we be rich or poor—to know how to get along in our poverty or how to profit from our wealth. It is our business to envy and regret nothing.

Envy and ambition, there are our two greatest enemies! Do not, however, mistake lack of ambition for laziness. There is no need to lie in a ditch at the bottom of a steep hill and declare loudly, "I have no ambition!" But do not attempt to rush up the hill if you have a weak heart. Usually we are unaware that we have a weak heart; that is, we almost never know our true possibilities. And because we are short of breath, we envy those who climb faster than ourselves and outstrip us. We envy especially those who outstripped us from the start because they went in automobiles.

Why should they have automobiles? Why should not everyone have his automobile?

That is the irritating problem of the distribution of riches, irritating because there seems no

right solution—right in the two meanings of the word, lawful and just. The only distribution of riches which you would really consider just would be a distribution according to equality. No more of some having too much and of others having not enough! Yes, an automobile for everyone . . . but the very next day, one of those now owning an automobile would arrange to secure an aeroplane.

For suppose that, starting at the very root of the matter, you proceeded to reapportion all wealth so that everyone should have an equal share. How long do you imagine that this equality would endure? Your distribution of wealth would be like the rain that falls on your garden: here the path is already dry while a pool of water has formed close by, and over there are soft, oozy spots between the lawn and the walls.

Are the best mixtures made from equal parts? How is it with perfumes and cocktails? What a wretched cook it would be who planned her sauces on the principle of equality!

The principle of equality gives rise to neither poise nor harmony. Jean-Jacques Rousseau made this melancholy discovery when through ignorance rather than on principle he wished to have a concert performed in which all the parts were written as if the brasses and wood instruments had naturally the same tones. And in such a concert,

would you have all the instruments play together all the time? Would you give them exactly the same number of notes to execute?

At least we might consent to having the distribution unequal provided the largest share were given only to the greatest merit. But we all know that the richest are not necessarily the most intelligent.

Nor are they necessarily the most stupid.

It is true, though, that cases occur frequently where you are quite right in asking, "Why this one and not that one? Why has this man realized an immense fortune while that other man continues to vegetate miserably?"

Besides, we often have a tendency to depreciate the merit of the man who has succeeded, when comparing it to the merit of the man who has failed. Let us admit that they had equal merit. The same thing happens in the case of the theater. A certain play runs through five hundred performances, while you have among your papers another play that is just as good and that no producer is willing to put on.

It is just as good. But unless it is better, has the author really the right to complain? In this as in all matters and for people as well as for things, there is an element of chance, which is really luck, since luck also depends on chance.

One may deserve good fortune and not have the

luck to receive it, but one can do nothing about it. We are lucky or not just as we are blond or brunette, just as we have an aquiline or a short nose. And when a man adds good luck to merit, well, his merit and good luck together are superior to a merit that is equal in itself, equal as merit, but that is also unlucky. Perhaps we shall even reach the point of considering luck as one of the forms of merit. Otherwise everyone would be lucky, would make his fortune quickly. And all would become millionaires at the same moment.

That is why one should never speak of inexplicable fortunes. Where someone has more good fortune than someone else it is always because he had something, perhaps a mere nothing, more than the other, and because he had in addition the good luck which determines success.

Hundreds of pretty girls go out every day from the workshops on the Rue de la Paix, just as pretty as or prettier than that moving-picture or music-hall star, who used to work in the shops just as they do, and who has married an American millionaire. When she was a humble worker for that great dressmaker, could he have supposed that she would become one of his best clients? Is it fair or not? Does it or does it not imply a just distribution of riches? But notice in the first place that not all the humble employees of the great dressmaker

could have become his clients—for who would then sew his dresses?

Perhaps I shall some day see in a film that poor little girl of ten with her beautiful eyes who, barefooted and shivering in her rags, vainly offered shoe-laces and brown-paper envelopes to the passers-by. Yes, perhaps I shall see her again and they will tell me that she is earning more in a week in Hollywood than she could get by selling all the shoe-laces and brown-paper envelopes in the world.

And perhaps that old sandwich man will also win the great lottery.

Great lotteries cannot be won by everybody, there are not enough of them. Has the old sandwich man ever been able to save enough sous or francs to buy a lottery ticket? And if he possessed so precious and considerable a sum, would he care to use it in that way?

Of course he might find a lottery ticket some day in a rubbish-box where some scornful player had thrown it disdainfully.

It is absolutely necessary for us to help our own good luck, and our first care should be to show that we have confidence in it. Confidence and tenacity! Shall I ask you to imitate those Arabs whom we see offering their rugs for sale all day long, with a gentle but persistent obstinacy? They will come back tomorrow and the next day, and the day after,

pursuing along the beaches or the café terraces an indifferent and bored clientèle that has no need or desire to buy rugs and that appears never to have bought one in the memory of man.

Yet here are immense shops that proclaim the commercial genius and fabulous fortune of their founder who began with a peddler's pack, just like these Arabs. Here is a magnificent subject to use in a picture book!

There are picture books to show you how to make your fortune, there are others to show you how to lose it, how to squander a fortune and ruin yourself. Why is there none to show you how to enjoy your fortune and make good use of it?

When we speak of the art of living we mean the art of living in wealth as well as in poverty.

I persist in affirming that the art of living in wealth is the more convenient, but it gives rise, none the less, to protests and disputes. No, I do not pity the rich who pretend to be bowed down under the weight of their existence as men of fortune and who groan, "Ah, if I could only hand over my millions to you!" They are well aware that they would never hand their millions over to me, that these sudden transformations only take place in the Arabian Nights.

But I must admit that, in our thoughts, we

willingly take the place of these unfortunate rich and dispose of their fortune in their stead.

We say, "Ah, if I only had a lot of money!" . . . Yet, nine times out of ten, the use we imagine we should make of this money we do not own is very different from the use made of it by those who actually possess it.

The money we do not own is the money we give away most freely, just as we do not always play quite the same sort of game with beans that we do with actual coins. And an ideal Crœsus, a Crœsus as we should imagine him, as we should like to appear if we were he—only we never have the chance—would have to be both a Mæcenas and a Saint Vincent de Paul.

We all agree about Saint Vincent de Paul. The joy of having a great deal of money is being able to give away a great deal. "Ah, if you knew how you are cheated when you give!" some ill-natured rich man will object.

It is better to be cheated ten times than to risk making an unkind mistake once; it is better to be a dupe than to be hard. And do you imagine it is very amusing to act the part of extreme poverty?

When a man is less wretched than he tells you to stir your pity, and than your pitying heart has believed, well, so much the better for him! But just the same, it is very unlikely that he leads a gilded existence. . . .

Never get into your high-powered car before making sure that the small cart of the Little Sisters of the Poor, which you passed at your doorstep, has been filled by your servants with clothes and food.

But perhaps you have not this high-powered car, which we are pleased to consider one of the distinctive signs of wealth. Perhaps you prefer to go on foot or to take the bus.

Take the bus, if you prefer, but do not feel obliged to convince your travelling companions that the bus is the best of all means of locomotion: "You see I, who am quite able to pay for a high-powered car, always get about by bus."

There is no need for the rich to impose their tastes upon us. When they are ostentatious they challenge us, when they are too simple they appear to make fun of us.

But do not let us, either, impose our tastes upon them, under the pretext that we know better than anyone the tastes of a rich man. Let us not be annoyed because such a man does not behave as we should behave in his place. We are not in his place. . . .

There are, they say, some millionaires so careless of their appearance that you might give them pennies. And no doubt they would take your pennies with delight. After all, it must be so monotonous to be the one who always gives and who never

receives, because it would never enter anyone's head that one could lack anything.

Why should the rich have, as it were, their own uniform? Why should we always see precious stuffs, jewels, furs and feathers about them, like indispensable attributes?

Man is the only animal of creation to have the sense of personal adornment, nor is this a mark of civilization, since the least civilized savages decorate their heads with elaborate ornaments, think they beautify themselves with tattooings, and stick shells in their ears and noses. But it would never occur to a greyhound to get herself a cloak embroidered with her initials and with an ermine collar. No tortoise would feel happier or prouder if her shell were encrusted with jewels.

Notice, also, how the sense of riches and poverty, like the sense of personal adornment, does not exist in any animal but man. Animals, however, do not lack the ideas of strength and weakness, and are not the weak and the strong the first examples of the rich and the poor?

It is no more natural to the rich to clothe themselves richly than it is for the greyhound to wear a cloak and the tortoise jewelry.

It is not worth while having money, you say, if you are not free to spend it. But there is no use in spending money if one gets no pleasure in the process. The burden of wealth is believing oneself

obliged to spend one's means on what is tiresome or disagreeable.

One man runs a racing stable, another supports a theater. "What a waste of money!" sigh the lovers of the theater, thinking of the racing stable, and the sportsmen sigh just the opposite, thinking of the theater.

But the saddest part is that, only too often, both of them are equally indifferent to the improvement of the equine race or to the future of our dramatic literature.

You adore travel and are never tired of saying that if you were rich you would set out at once for India, or would visit Japan. Are you going to force someone to make a tour of the world merely because he is rich, when a railway train nauseates him and he is seasick the moment he sets foot on a boat?

You declare with great assurance, "I can't understand why one should always stay at home when one has a large fortune."

But one may be very comfortable at home, even with a large fortune. One may prefer the Place de la Concorde to the ruins of Angkor, and the little fields of home, edged with hawthorn, to wide desert horizons. One may prefer the view from one's window to that which one goes fifty thousand miles to find. And even if one is rich, one

is permitted to shut the window and go to bed with a book.

We ourselves, who are so anxious to go around the world, are we so sure that we should still desire to do so if we had the means?

My first memory of travel is of a trip of five miles in the public coach that furnished indifferent service to the small town where my grandparents lived. It was a trip that I made often during my childhood and always with the same keen regret that the whole five miles lay entirely through the open country, along a road that skirted only a few isolated farms, without passing a single group of houses.

To my mind, this did not count as a real journey. It would have been a real journey if we had passed through a real "settlement" with shops and with townsfolk on the doorsteps, drawn by the sound of horses' hooves striking against the pavements—people who would have run out to see the coach pass with me, of course, in it.

Thus I already had childishly and obscurely the knowledge that travel which is movement, only exists in relation to the man who does not travel, in short that one travels less for one's own pleasure than because others do not travel.

So it is, when I am held back by business or lack of money, and cannot travel myself, that I

wonder why the man who is free and has ample means should be such a stay-at-home.

When he does stay at home, you intend that the rich man's house shall at least be managed according to your ideas instead of his own. You wish him to have a profusion of art pieces, of paintings and tapestries, even when he likes nothing but whitewashed walls. And he must choose these works of art according to your taste under pain of having no taste at all in your eyes. The rich man has no right to buy any sort of painting, only one which pleases you whether it pleases him or not.

Strange servitude of money! We believe that money permits one to do as one pleases. Yes, if you wish to pass for an idiot or a miser.

Some, indeed, are willing to be considered so, and these are really strong, with all the strength of their fortune, when they stand out against public opinion, do as they choose and are not afraid to declare, "I may be a miser; it is possible. I may be an idiot, but tell me so to my face if you dare! Have I not the right to be an idiot and a miser, have I not every right since I am rich?"

All the hotel stewards, all the café waiters and taxi-drivers will tell you that the richest men never give the largest tips. Only the rich man has the right to give an insignificant tip without incurring the scornful smile of the head steward.

There is this difference between avarice and economy: economy is a means of procuring money while avarice is a method of making a profit on the money one already has. Our hatred of misers springs from the general belief that no one should possess money just for himself, that it should be used also for the sake of others.

You hate avarice and admire economy; one is a vice, the other a virtue, but where does the one end and the other begin?

If you have a great deal of money that you do not spend you will be called a miser, while you will be congratulated on being economical if you have not much money and save it jealously. Avarice is a vice of the rich and economy a virtue of the poor.

Was the ant who drove away the grasshopper miserly or economical? We should have to know the condition of her storerooms. In any case, she lost a chance that day to make an elegant gesture and by no means won our sympathy.

Besides, who knows whether, on returning home, after following her undesirable guest a little way along the road to make sure she had left—who knows if she did not find her house overturned by the brutal heel of some careless or unkind passer-by, find all her provisions destroyed and not a single morsel of worm or fly left for herself? Had she given some of it away it would have been that

much saved, and perhaps it would have been better for the grasshopper to profit than no one.

But it was the principle that mattered? It is the same principle that orders you to intrust your money to this bank or that lawyer, instead of enjoying it as you wish, and then some fine day the banker or the lawyer clears out with the money. . . .

But the unfeeling behavior of bankers and lawyers is not set up as a principle, thank God, like the virtues of saving and the necessity of economy.

You will hardly find one unscrupulous lawyer to a thousand economical persons. Of course, for that matter, a single unscrupulous lawyer can ruin a thousand economical persons.

It is certainly less painful to have no fortune than to have a fortune no longer.

Actually, how much money does one need to be rich? Nothing is more variable than the value of money, but the characters and needs of men are quite as variable. On the whole, wealth is measured less by the amount of money you possess than by the necessities that possess you.

One is always rich and poor to someone. What crime and also what folly to attempt to raise the poor up against the rich! One is always rich or poor to someone, just as during the war one was always considered a shirker by someone.

Crouched down in your hole in the front line you were considered a shirker by the machine-gunner in his ambuscade, and he in his turn was considered a shirker by the man at the listening post. . . .

Money has no other value than its purchasing power; everything depends on what you wish to buy.

A workman who earns four francs an hour, and never sets foot in a wineshop, is rich compared to the man who earns twice as much but also has a passion for alcohol and apéritifs. Unless you only consider a man rich when he drinks two or three apéritifs before each meal and half a dozen glasses of liqueur afterwards!

If you separate the idea of wealth from the idea of the enjoyment it procures it loses all meaning. But we do not necessarily enjoy an object in proportion to what it has cost us. For example, the lover of antiquities will enjoy twice as much this mirror or that piece of china which he got for a song in the sordid hole of some second-hand dealer.

There may be toys that are especially reserved for rich children, but are they any more amusing for that? And this little girl in a lace dress with a sumptuously gowned doll in her arms casts an envious eye on the pebble or bit of wood, wrapped in rags, that is carefully rocked by some beggar child.

Then there are all those priceless riches that cannot be bought, the air we breathe, the sun that makes us vigorous and joyful. Even when there is an equal amount of money, are different people rich in the same fashion? If they live in one of those six-story houses, stifled by smoke from the trains of the Gare de Lyons, is it the same as if they had taken one of the trains out of that very station and had got down twelve hours later on some small square, fragrant of the sea, in the shade of the plane-trees?

See all these charming flowers that are cultivated by the gatekeeper in his little garden, only a few yards square. Though it may be the finest and most thriving of all gardens, we have never heard of a gatekeeper's garden that was designed by Le Nôtre.

VI. THE BAUBLE REPUTATION

To say that one prefers glory to gold is to say that one prefers the smoke of the cigar to the cigar itself. Of course it is only smoke, but a smoke that enfolds and intoxicates us; its odor caresses our nostrils and its curves delight our eyes. And of what use would a cigar be that was not smoked?

Besides, no one forbids us to desire both money and glory, and those who sneer at either one or the other always suggest one of those poor devils who in some night refuge discuss the respective merits of a Rolls-Royce and a Hispano.

After all, it is very rare to find those whom we call "the glories of our country" reduced either to vending fish in the public markets or to living on them, and if they did so it would no doubt be due to a certain affectation. . . .

What is true is that great fame is not always accompanied by equal fortune save in that country, quoted by everyone, where everything is measured by its price, glory as well as all the rest.

And what is especially true is that there is posthumous fame, while it is obviously impossible to imagine a posthumous fortune. And then you are surprised that a certain man should have lived so

humbly, in such poverty, because he is celebrated today, though at the time he was not famous and gave no hint of ever going to become so!

The hundred thousand francs of ready money, left by some old beggar in his straw mattress, will profit no one except his heirs or the state, unless some thief gets hold of it. But when the work of this poet or that inventor, unknown during his lifetime, shines out before men after his death, the resulting glory remains personally attached to his name.

For that matter, we may always wonder whether he will be any the better off for it. Yes, if one is convinced, as I am, that one continues to live in memory. But even if you do not share this belief it is always better to leave a good memory, rather than a mediocre one or no memory at all.

I consider that it is not really worth the trouble of pursuing glory or of achieving it if one has no belief in the value of a lasting memory. And do not say that one obtains glory without having sought it, without having lifted a finger to obtain it. Fame is a career like any other. Like the pursuit of money, it demands will and perseverance. We may meet with it sooner than we expect, or when we no longer think of it, but we must have thought of it sometime.

Whence springs that modesty or that hypocrisy that lets men confess more readily their desire to

be rich than their desire to be famous? How does it happen that when a merchant is proud of enlarging his shop and doubling his business you admire his energy, while if a poet should confess to you his desire to write a flawless sonnet, you would only laugh, shrug your shoulders and murmur, "He is not over modest." If you seem to attach no importance to what you do, I assure you that others will not have the initiative to consider what you do very important.

But why should you wish for fame except in the future? What benefit could you expect to derive from it in the present? When you crossed a street or entered a public place, a passer-by would turn around or you would hear them whispering from table to table in a restaurant, and from box to box, from seat to seat, at the theater, "It is he." The friend who was with you would draw himself up, full of pride, and whisper in your ear, half serious, half laughing, "This is fame!"

Yes, indeed, I mean it quite seriously. This is fame, there is no other kind.

Fame is the curiosity aroused by your coming, the same, for that matter, that would be aroused by your magnificent burial. And this fame you, a philosopher, share equally with an athlete, the athlete with a tenor, and the tenor with a famous shoe-merchant on the big square. Fame

has no other way of revealing itself to its favorites than by showing them that they do not pass unnoticed.

That, by the way, is why fame is so very tiresome and to pass unnoticed such a relief! But we may suppose that most people do not dislike this fatigue, since they are never weary of being noticed, if not for their work, then for their cravat, or for the color of their waistcoat, or the shape of their hat. And you may be sure that their fame will be none the less, even though the world will soon forget just what it sprang from—whether it was really due to the shape of their hat or to some exploit or to a big book.

You may be sure, also, that this sort of fame is quite as durable as any other, and that posterity has sometimes preserved the name of a man who invented a certain manner of hairdressing and has forgotten the name of one who endowed humanity with a system of philosophy.

But is the quality of the fame the same in the case of the hairdresser and the philosopher? If they inspire equal curiosity and, let us admit it, equal gratitude, is not this admiring curiosity mingled with gratitude to a greater or lesser extent?

Then we should first have to know to whom we owed the most gratitude, and who had done us the better service, the inventor of a new philosophy or the inventor of a new hat. In any case, if a name

is remembered after a hundred or even after fifty years it is indeed glorious, and we do not need to know whether it is for philosophy or for a hat.

To return to the present, the principal object of glory and the chief care of those who have obtained it is: not to be confused with the obscure mass of those without glory. They wish to be "distinguished." The ever flourishing institution of what we justly call "distinctions" or decorations is proof of this.

But a bit of colored ribbon in one's buttonhole is so childish a gesture that it will not bear thinking about. Yet in order to have the right to this gesture, reasonable persons, no longer children, are ready to commit any action, the best or the worst. Does not this stagger the understanding?

And this ingenuous hierarchy, from the ribbon to the rosette, from the rosette to the cravat, from the rosette to the *grand cordon!*

Better yet, they have made a new invention, only a few years old, which proves the solidity of the institution. Just as an egg, served on a piece of ham or toast, is more impressive than a simple fried egg, they have thought up a whole series of rosettes, of silver or gold ribbons, so that the commander may not be mistaken for a mere officer, and the commander-in-chief may never (again) need blush at being mistaken for a simple commander.

Modesty, of course, must not be forgotten. If people were not to know when you went by that you were a commander or a commander-in-chief, not merely an officer, you would be ill about it. They must be informed at once of your exact rank, but *modestly*.

This is the sort of reasoning that makes you keep any sort of insignia off your overcoat and yet leave the coat wide open so that people may notice the insignia on your vest. . . . And it is the same sort of modesty that so seldom lets us acknowledge our desire to be decorated, or the pleasure we take in having it happen. It would seem as if we wished to deny it as a bit of childishness (which it is), like still loving barley sugar and chocolate éclairs.

But it is very pleasant to go on loving barley sugar and chocolate éclairs all our life; it is very nice when a grandfather and grandmother stuff their grandchildren with barley sugar and chocolate éclairs as an excuse for casually entering the candy-store or bake-shop themselves.

When, after a thousand overtures, your name finally appears among the list of the newly promoted, why not confess frankly that you have got the wish of your heart and that you are delighted?

Why trump up other explanations, almost excuses? Why say jestingly that all the world is decorated and that one must do as all the world does? Why announce that you don't care about it

for yourself, but desire it for your sons, your colleagues, your old mother?

When you are decorated at last, will you pretend never to wear your decorations? Those who do not know you are decorated will not be surprised at your empty buttonhole, while you will tell those who know it nothing, whether you wear your bit of ribbon or not.

But the most foolish attitude of all is no doubt to refuse ostentatiously what, rightly or wrongly, so many others desire. This will not make the others desire it less, but it will be most impolite towards them. If you do not wish to be decorated, it is very unlikely that anybody will do you violence, and you have no need to protest as if they were skinning you alive or to proclaim your aversion from all the housetops. Even if this decoration adds nothing to your merit, nevertheless you would not die of it.

In any case, do not imagine that you are giving us a lesson in modesty and delicacy by your refusal. Real modesty and delicacy would consist in not letting anyone know that it had been offered you. And it sometimes happens that, in your eagerness to show how modest and delicate you are, you refuse something that has not yet been offered you.

Your modesty and delicacy cannot endure publicity about your name? Be sure people will speak less about your decoration than about your refusal.

For after all, those who refuse a decoration are appreciably fewer than those who accept one.

There is as yet no instance of a man's refusing a decoration because he thought himself unworthy; he always insists that the decoration is unworthy of him. This reserved man, this delicate and modest man, exaggerates . . .

However, we shall all agree that what is odd and comic indeed is the quality of the men who give decorations to others and who in the case in point act as state ministers, even as a council of ministers.

At school, ranks and prizes are distributed by a master whose task it is to distinguish the relative value of his pupils, and the examiners who award diplomas are at least supposed to understand the questions they ask the candidates and the subjects of the examination.

Here we have nothing like this, but is there any reason to be disturbed for all that?

Fame is bestowed upon us by the majority, who manifestly know nothing about it, just as the mandate of deputy is given by universal suffrage. Why should it be necessary to know more? Why should it require more precautions or scrupulous care to bestow the infinitesimal part of glory that lies in a decoration?

After all, it does not seem probable that the de-

cision of a specialist would offer any better guarantees, or that you would be inclined to accept the honor more willingly. Those who know nothing about it, on condition that they are aware they know nothing about it, offer this advantage, that they decide nothing according to their personal preferences, according to their own taste which may always be interested or perverted, for taste always implies the possibility of bad or doubtful taste.

The judgment of your peers is no less subject to error than the judgment of the ignorant masses, and it is especially subject to intrigue and to involuntary injustice, at least in your opinion.

Chance may be absurd, but it is never unjust because it is never deliberately unjust. If all the names on a list are placed in a hat and your name does not come out of the hat, you cannot complain of injustice.

Injustice begins only when all the names are out of the hat. The innocent hand of the youngest member of society is never unjust, and if you must be angry with someone, it can only be with the master juggler himself.

Compared to universal suffrage, deliberate choice would suffer from precisely this drawback, that it takes place among master jugglers. This is quite evident in the Academies, for example, where they use this method of getting new members.

Since it depends upon thirty-nine academicians

to choose you as the fortieth, is the call that you are obliged to pay upon each of them meant to convince you of the sureness, the infallibility of their judgment?

It would never occur to you to ask your way of a blind man. Would you be any more apt to ask it of nineteen blind men plus one more? Or if one out of thirty-nine could see clearly, his opinion would have value only if the majority of the other blind men would consent to it.

My imagination begins to play with the idea of what would happen if, some twenty-fifth of October, the day of the plenary meeting of the *Institut de France,* a sudden cataclysm, thunder, a bomb should wipe out the house, completely destroying the dome and everything beneath it.

How would the Academies be recruited if there were no more academicians?

Perhaps we might consider their suppression pure and simple and trust that, though deprived of her immortals, immortal France would continue to fulfil her destiny!

But we have too strong a feeling for hierarchies to give up an institution that creates a hierarchy even on a plane where from its very nature nothing and no one ought to be ranged in hierarchical order. And when we wished to classify talent and intelligence again we could only apply to whoever happened to be at the summit of our hierarchy. The

institute would be reconstructed immediately, at one swoop, as a Council of Ministers by the President of the Republic, and there would still be fair weather for the governmental muses.

But just for the sake of amusement, imagine what would happen if a single member of the French Academy, a single one, out of all his colleagues, had escaped the massacre?

As in the years when a high death-rate in the academy increases the electoral power of the survivors, so this sole academician would automatically become qualified to determine by his single vote the names to the thirty-nine empty chairs. It is true that the thirty-nine elections would take place immediately, without balloting and without a single blank vote; unless, on the contrary, our academician, embarrassed or delighted at his dictatorship, unable to decide or choosing to prolong the delights of his indecision, should cast thirty-nine blank votes and continue to do so to the very end. . . .

When so many green coats and plumed hats might depend on only a single academician, can you not endure having the ornament in your buttonhole depend on a minister who, for that matter, might be an academician just as an academician may be a minister?

Nor must you be amazed or distressed if in the game of promotions the "contingent" of crosses re-

served for each department of the ministry makes you, a poet, appear on the list of promotions of the Legion of Honor under the heading of Hygiene, and a painter or sculptor under Agriculture or Public Works. No particular honor is reserved for each administration, except in the columns of the *Journal Officiel,* and the ribbon is equally red for all. . . . Apollo will recognize his own.

But perhaps I seem to be lingering too long, with too many details and too much complacency over this question of decorations? I know of nothing more serious or with a wider influence. It is at the basis of the art of living. We plan and organize our life differently, according to whether we do or do not believe in the decoration, according to whether we do or do not have faith in its importance, its interest, its significance.

Your efforts will be disciplined by it and your ambition turned into its proper channel. Is there anything more melancholy than a boundless ambition that has no object? Here you provide a precise object for your ambition; you wish to be distinguished.

It doesn't amount to much, it's a mere nothing? But does it amount to much to be first in your class, is it much to win a prize for excellence?

Yet it is with all this mysticism of prizes and the relative ranking of compositions that men are di-

vided into good and bad scholars from their very childhood. All the rest of one's life one remains a good or a bad scholar, and one will attach the same virtue to the Legion of Honor as one did formerly to the honor list.

There have indeed been school dunces who later have accomplished finer work and rendered more distinguished services than the boy who carried off all the prizes. I admit it, but would they not have accomplished as much if they had not begun by being dunces? And was it because they had been dunces that they distinguished themselves later? This would be a convenient principle for dunces, but a dangerous rule!

It sometimes happens that one is right and the whole world wrong, but who is ever certain of being right? And are you really wrong when you are wrong along with everybody else? In any case, do not cite me the man who appeals to posterity, as an example of modesty.

You do not get a soft pillow through laziness, only through orderly and disciplined work.

It is all very fine to be a reformer, an innovator, a rebel, but how very fatiguing! What pride it implies also, and what uncertainty! You appeal to posterity, but where is it, can it answer you? You state that you have your own conscience, but who directs it?

Panurge's sheep ran stupidly, one behind the

other, into the sea. But if a sheep had remained behind it would have been eaten.

The player who holds the cards at baccarat may make a wrong draw, but if his draw has helped the banker he has to pay the forfeit. It is always best to follow the rules of the game.

But he who risks nothing gets nothing? No, he who does nothing has nothing. Action is not a risk; one may act and risk nothing. Action is continuous; risk has something exceptional about it.

"For exceptional reasons," says the wording of certain decorations, and quite justly. The light of an automobile, coming suddenly into a dark road, may warn us not to go to the right when the road turns to the left and may prevent us from falling to the bottom of a ravine. So, thanks to this unexpected and sudden light, we have had our life miraculously saved. But I like even better the little lantern that lights us along the road without our ever needing miraculous help.

The essential virtues, which are the useful virtues, do not come in sudden gusts. Perhaps one is not constantly heroic or constantly a genius, but one is constantly good and constantly honest or one isn't honest and good at all and it isn't worth the trouble pretending to be.

There is no record of a man's ever attaining glory in all fields at once and it is natural that, in

the distribution of prizes, glory should be parceled out according to the reasons for deserving it. In the distribution of prizes there is the great captain, the great writer, the great scholar, the great artist and the benefactor of humanity—the only one of them who does not need to be great in order to have a statue made of him. A benefit is not great or small, it is a benefit.

Are they going to institute an order of preference in this selection of glories, as if they should decide that it was more brilliant, flattering or agreeable to win the prize for Latin than for geography?

The common characteristic of all statues is their monstrous appearance, I mean in an etymological sense. They only raise statues to "monstrosities," that is to those who do not resemble others, who are worthy of astonishing others, worthy of being "exhibited."

Resolve, then, on being a monster if you wish to have a statue raised to you, unless it be a statue like those above the tombs in the Campo Santo at Genoa, or like that of the hotel-keeper who, on a bit of land that belongs to him on the other side of the street from his hotel, has had his effigy raised in bronze and has inscribed in gilt letters on the marble pedestal that the man represented has built the hotel across the way and that this hotel is the best in the whole neighborhood.

They raise statues to the dead, but for the sake of the living and to instruct the living rather than to honor the dead. Which explains why, once a personage is hoisted up on a pedestal in bronze or marble, his features will be enlarged, but certain particulars of his life, which the living have no interest in remembering, will disappear in the background. At the foot of a statue to some illustrious philosopher, you will remember his work and forget that he beat his wife and children.

But do not set out upon the conquest of glory by neglecting to conduct your life well. Do not set up as a principle that "glory excuses everything." And if you count upon posterity to balance the reckoning between what you spend and what you receive, do not begin by systematically spending everything you have all the time, or the balance will be struck very quickly.

Fame is not scandal. It is true, none the less, that fame rests on man's memory, and there is nothing like scandal to encourage a persistent memory.

This risk of scandal is the other side of fame, its true danger and weakness. Fame often disappoints us in the selection it makes among our work, which is so rarely the selection we should have made ourselves.

But to be just, it is not fame that is at fault here, rather it is memory on which fame is forced

to depend. This lack of discernment with which you reproach fame is only a vice of our memory.

How many persons to whom you should mention a famous murder, a murder they remembered, could tell you whether the name you gave was that of the murderer or of the victim?

The fame of Alcibiades rests most firmly upon the tail he cut off his dog. But would he have had no fame if no one had been shocked at this performance—if Alcibiades' dog had been the sort of dog that usually had its tail cut off, if Alcibiades had cut off the tail of a fox terrier?

VII. THE CALL

The telephone is here within reach of my hand and I begin to regard it with wondering anxiety. By means of it I could this minute, if I chose, send my thought, my will, my possibilities of action far away in any direction I wished, to a friend, an enemy, or an unknown person. I could give an order, make a decision, agree, refuse, send a compliment or a threat.

What news may also reach me over it, joyous or sad, stirring or indifferent, banal or formidable and ready to change everything in and about me? Any moment its shrill bell may ring out, as a signal for what?

We stand at the beginning of our life as we stand before the telephone. Whom are we going to call? Who will call us?

But the connection is never certain and is full of the mystery that accompanies every summons.

Suddenly the bell rings. "You are wanted on the 'phone," says the telephone girl, and it is the voice of your inner genius that calls you and stirs you so deeply, that summons you to this or that, to the glory of arms or the art of oratory, to poetry

or the priesthood, business or aviation! "Wanted on the 'phone!" Perhaps it is a wrong call, or the call of a practical joker. . . .

Also, to have liberty of choice, the instrument must not be out of order, the connection must not be broken and we must have the help of the telephone girl.

It is perfectly legitimate, when we choose a career, to have in mind its highest rank. It is right that the supernumerary should see himself as a director and the sub-deacon as a bishop.

Though both the words and the air are out of fashion, an exquisite and melancholy song our mother used to sing is always timely. In its verses the infant, rocked in her arms, adopts one after another the most varied careers or professions and is always at the head of them:

En attendant sur mes genoux
Beau général, endormez-vous!

But should we wish to become a general, or any of the other personages dreamed for us by this tender and confident maternal pride, the very first point of all is not to sleep.

A mere love of travel will not discover an unknown country any more than putting on an aviator's costume will enable one to pilot an aeroplane across the Atlantic.

What causes so many men to mistake their true

vocations is that they believe themselves called to be officers before having been soldiers. The attraction of a profession lies mostly in its external aspects and in a certain number of flattering attributes which serve to represent it to us. Hence the importance of the uniform, the plume, the automobile.

In the present state of our customs the question of the automobile has become of decisive importance. Do we not often decide on such or such a business, as young girls decide on such or such a marriage, so that we may have an automobile?

I agree in calling this age an age of speed, not because of the speed itself, which I hope I have shown has no value except by comparison and could never correspond to a positive reality, but because of the sort of mystic influence we grant to a method of locomotion that is more rapid than others.

Does not the evident dislike of youth for positions with the government spring from the fact that most public officials and their families still have to get about on feet?

If we have ceased to be tempted by the bait of a pension, which once hurried our fathers into the service of the state and made them regard this service as most desirable for their sons, it is because there were no automobiles in their day. But now their sons wish to ride about in them at once,

to enjoy immediately all that goes with them. "What shall I care about having a car, when I am too old to drive it and when age and rheumatism will have nailed me to my corner? I want one now."

Such reasoning, though less absurd and paradoxical than it seems, might lead us to suppose that the salaries of public officials, instead of increasing with their years of service and seniority, ought to decrease and that it would be just and logical to give the largest salary not to the director but to the supernumerary.

"A pearl necklace," remarks a certain young rebel, "a pearl necklace and a fur coat? A lot of good it does you when you have lost your figure and got a double chin!"

I assure you, my young rebel, that your youth is worth all the fur coats and pearl necklaces in the world. In spite of those pearls, large as nuts, about her skinny neck and the latest and most sumptuous creation of a great dressmaker on her humped back you can hear a woman lament, "Oh, for a dollar dress and my youth!"

One can't have everything? After all, why not? Why wait to give me something until I can have neither pleasure nor profit out of what you give me?

How many times during the war, in the presence of the cruelty of all those graves dug so prema-

turely, have I not wondered by a similar sort of reasoning if the territorials and the reservists of the territorial army ought to have been sent into the front line. Would it not have been more reasonable—yes, reasonable—to call out the older classes first?

In any case, it would have been neither unreasonable nor unjust. These classes had already accomplished something, and in the case of most of them it was about all they could accomplish.

Would it be any more reasonable, would it be any more just to lock up one's full granary, to eat one's wheat in the ear and to sacrifice all the fine hope of later harvests to save the harvest that was already gathered?

Hope should not become a form of laziness, as happens when some confident and optimistic man refuses disdainfully a modest position, because he wishes to undertake only large transactions, and while he waits for them does nothing at all. "Never," says this man, "could I bind myself down to work for fifteen hundred francs a month."

But the most important of all vocations is the vocation for work, for application, for effort. Whatever goal you select, pursue it energetically; let nothing turn you aside and above all, never give up.

You admire this personage who has conquered

Paris though he arrived there in wooden shoes. You admire his having worn wooden shoes. Admire instead the fact that he was never too tired or too discouraged to go forward. To succeed one must go on, in spite of one's wooden shoes. And since it is quite easy to walk in zigzags or to walk backwards, admire also the way he never lost his sense of direction, as you admire the steadiness of his walk.

That is why, instead of fleeing the beaten paths, you ought to remember that beaten paths always permit the best walking.

The crowd is thicker along them? But do you consider enthusiasm and emulation of no importance? And how the signposts add to your safety! "Danger," say other signposts, but only if you stop there. Do not stop.

One does not always see the highest towers from the greatest distance. There are turns in the road, rises and descents; and an enormous tower on the horizon will suddenly disappear behind a screen of little apple trees in an orchard. You say you listen to the sound of the bells? Who knows where the wind will carry it!

Nothing is so good a guide along the right road as someone who has preceded you along it and gone over it from end to end. The sound of the bells, the sight of the tower is the vocation, but perhaps he who persists in the paternal career is wiser; and

whoever goes forward peacefully, arm in arm with his father, is no doubt most sure not to miss the way.

Yet do not imagine, or allow your father to imagine, that you are lost if you are tempted by a new path. No career is hazardous if you undertake it with prudence, perseverance, and love.

One should love what one does, and one only does well what one loves. Now, one should do well whatever one does. The professional conscience is love of one's profession and any profession is hateful that is carried on without conscience.

The worst enemies of work are not so much laziness (very lazy men have been able to become very hard workers), as a taste for adventure and amateurishness.

It is the taste for adventure that disgusts you with sustained effort, that effort for which the amateur immediately likes to declare himself unfitted—and even to plume himself somewhat coquettishly on this incapacity.

You have to put your work on the stocks a hundred times; the amateur and the adventurer would rather put a hundred different pieces of work on the stocks.

The poets write odes praising the fresh morning air and the forest wet with dew, urging us to rise

and pick forget-me-nots and strawberries, sometimes urging us to chase the hare and partridge.

But I know of no ode in which the poet says, "Rise and continue the task begun yesterday! Rise in pride and delight to take up again your interrupted work!"

That ode is never sung, but is mournfully shrieked by the strident whistle of the factory—it is called a siren, in what derision!—and it even takes pains to sound a quarter of an hour ahead of time, being quite convinced that when it is a matter of returning to the factory to "continue the task begun and take up the interrupted work" a quarter of an hour is not too much in which to forget one's disgust and make up one's mind to it. . . .

Where are the pride and happiness we spoke of? Yet this pride and happiness ought to be the same whatever the work, and to lie solely and invariably in the act of working. We should be proud and happy, the signal-man as well as the engineer, the man who breaks stones along the road as well as the man who calculates the capacity of a bridge.

Not everyone has graduated from the Polytechnical School. The mistake is to suppose that there can be no salvation outside of the Polytechnical School, and to despair of one's sons if they have not been able to become polytechnicians.

Selections made through classes and examinations do not always correspond to the necessities of every-

day life, and life itself is a perpetual class, an examination from moment to moment from which you will not be excused by securing a mere diploma, no matter how flattering it may be.

Do you say it is disconcerting that theory can be opposed to practice? But what is a theory that is not justified by practice? And is there any practice that is not the result of some theory, good or bad? For only the theory should be good or bad; there is no reason why the practice should not always be excellent.

If I order you to play out of tune, you ought to play surpassingly out of tune.

But to oppose theory to practice is to oppose the musicians to the leader of the orchestra. It is having the leader beat out three time and having the orchestra play two time or four time.

The best thing is for the leader to be able to play all the instruments in his orchestra himself. The best theorist is he who, having explained his theory, puts it into practice. Can you imagine a swimming teacher who never got into the water, who explained the movements of swimming from a chair?

A factory owner has no real authority in his factory until the day when his workers see him in blue overalls, working like a laborer.

There is no question of having the owner take

the place of the workman. He has other things to do and in spite of what the workmen too often imagine, more pressing cares and heavier responsibilities; but the workmen should know that in addition to having these responsibilities and cares, he is not ignorant of any of the details of the task that he imposes on others, of its requirements and difficulties, and that for that very reason he is the owner.

Too often we are the victims of technicians and specialists. We yield too complacently to the illusion of technique. The technician appears to us to stand on a pedestal and to make use of a redoubtable and mysterious terminology that is unintelligible to the crowd.

A little girl of my acquaintance once uttered some incomprehensible and strange sounds before me, and when I inquired about this singular language she replied, "It's Russian." . . . "Russian? You speak Russian now?" . . . "Yes," she answered, looking me up and down with a superior and somewhat contemptuous air, "but it's a Russian you can't understand because I invent it. . . ."

When technicians and specialists overwhelm me with their learning and explain themselves in their incomprehensible and secret vocabulary, I have a vague inclination to ask them if they are not speaking the Russian of this little girl.

Ah, these competent people! You shake your head . . . "That fellow is a marvel of competence!" He is a "marvel of competence" because you say so, and you say so because he was the first to say so himself.

The competency of competent people is based first of all on the ignorance and acquiescence of the incompetent. It is a title that is open to the whole world, like that of civil engineer. One does not need either a special diploma or a special order to get it. For example, at the restaurant you bow before the competency of the cellarman.

This personage has substituted the schoolboy's black apron for a white one, but he is a master for all that and you inquire of him concerning the little light wine with which you hope to accompany the menu of your choice. He points out to you the wine that pleases him, though it may not necessarily please you, with an authority before which you feel powerless and like a small boy.

It is in vain for you to be obscurely aware that the choice of any particular bottle is perhaps less a question of taste than of price.

Do not answer him, agree and keep silent. Then, taking your courage in both hands, order a mineral water. . . .

The bottle that the cellarman advised you to drink he would not have drunk himself. Competency never runs a risk.

"I should have led in such a way and discarded in such a way," announces the amateur bridge-player after the party is over, from where he has been watching the game over your shoulder. One would always have played differently and probably better when one does not hold the cards. And Napoleon's errors in tactics are corrected with improvised strategy, and with matches laid out on a tablecloth.

Does not every village have, for the careful oversight of its public works, a corps of benevolent inspectors, recruited by themselves outside of all the professional schools of the commune, department, or state?

The epithet "informal" applied to criticism ought to mean that it assumes no responsibilities. When the play has been put on, when the book has been brought out, the critic arrives who declares, "It is good," or "It is bad," but after all washes his hands of it. Yes, that is very convenient! . . .

Good sense and prudence both recommend that whoever judges should not expose himself to being judged. Most public positions require references or guaranties. Examinations are necessary before you can be employed as a humble clerk in any department of the government, and in order to be named a councilor you must at least have taken your degree in law. Only the prefect escapes these

obligations as to classes and diplomas. It is enough for him to be a French citizen, aged just twenty-one, to be qualified for his high office.

The same sheepskin makes you a celebrated lawyer or an agent for shady cases. And those who have merely taken their degrees have been known to triumph at the assizes or the criminal courts over doctors of law, or even to defend them as clients.

Who will be president of the Republic thirty years from now? Perhaps he is struggling today with a host of small troubles, or is besieged by serious difficulties, and it would not take much to make him drown himself.

We prepare our future but we do not make it. If someone fell asleep tonight and woke in thirty years he would no doubt be much astonished at his fortune or misfortune. But it would doubtless be because of his having slept.

I believe that we should always act as if there were no such thing as undeserved success or failure. And of the two, by the way, which is the more scandalous and immoral? If everyone succeeded who deserved to succeed, no doubt success would no longer be possible for those who did not deserve it.

They say that work ought to bring its own reward; I agree, but on condition that one loves to

work. It would be exaggeration to insist that idleness lacks charms of its own. You say you would be bored if you did nothing? So much the better for you! I congratulate you on it. But when men watch others working beside them, while they do nothing themselves, do they feel any envy or remorse? I can more readily believe that the inaction of those who do not work is likely to provoke those who do.

On the plateau of Breitfirst, in Alsace, dogs from Alaska were used to transport food during the war. One day when a heavy sleigh, drawn by about a dozen dogs, was passing along the trench in the snow, a little fox terrier on the edge of the trench watched his colleagues labor, barking joyously. The leader of the team caught him with one snap and tossed him to the second dog, who tossed him to the third. And when he had reached the last dog in the team there was no more fox terrier. . . .

The Alaskan huskies were convinced that in a well organized society the social law, at least the social law for dogs, demanded that none should be idle or useless.

But they were only rather savage dogs, that acted and thought like savages.

The little fox terrier may have been idle, but he amused the whole detachment of infantry to which his master belonged and brought back memories of home and peace, of walks along roads that were

neither slippery with ice nor torn by shell holes, along Sunday roads with the children on bicycles and the little fox terrier running behind the bicycles and jumping as the children ordered him. So he was not useless.

There is a social hierarchy, but there is no hierarchy of social necessities; and a harmonious society is one in which great and small unite to form the same harmony.

The famous "banquet of Life" mentioned by the poet is like a picnic to which everyone has been asked to bring his share, not merely according to his resources but also according to his imagination.

Well, how many picnics suffer, just as life does, from an extreme monotony, because everyone brings exactly the same thing as his neighbor? No variety, no imagination!

You may have noticed, also, that ham, cold chicken, and potato salad are there in abundance, also mayonnaise, but never or almost never have they remembered to bring enough bread. . . .

VIII. USES OF THE MIND

You will never boast of your mistakes in spelling, but you are quite willing to declare that you cannot add.

We pretend to despise the poets, but at heart we should be very glad to have the soul of a poet, and we value above everything the faculties of the imagination. Imagination often irritates and frightens, but it also attracts us. It is through the imagination that we escape from ourselves and are able to lie to ourselves, since falsehood is merely controlled imagination, industrialized and socialized imagination, pocketbook imagination in regard to the needs of daily life.

If we did not mix our daily life with a little imagination and poetry, that is to say with a little falsehood, we should never get through the day.

In the conduct of our daily life, the accomplishment of our tasks or the performance of our duties, we are all more or less like those scholars of whom they say that they are "occupied with matters outside their studies." It is not considered a good thing to be occupied with matters outside one's studies . . . the remark is critical . . . but just the same it is somewhat flattering. We smile, we

shrug our shoulders, but none the less we are rather proud of it. . . .

But are these matters outside our studies ever exact sciences? Does the student with outside interests neglect the regular program in order to take a deeper plunge into problems of arithmetic?

Do not bring forward those cases, I admit more and more frequent, in which if boys shirk their duties and fail to learn their lessons it is not in order to read a novel or write a tragedy but to install a radio-set secretly in their room.

Do you call the deviser of the radio-set a scholar and a scientist? Come, he is rather a poet whose imagination seeks the help of waves of sound so that he may pass more conveniently beyond the walls of the school and make the finest and quickest voyages on the spot, now to Barcelona, now to Warsaw, now to London and the jazz of the Savoy! . . .

Do not regret these hours stolen from study and consecrated to marvelous wanderings. Only at school have we truly time to waste, because only at school is our time so regulated and concentrated upon study. A man who preserved his scholarly habits all the rest of his life would be well fitted to compose a work impressive for its length and completeness at least. Think of the training that is given our minds between the ages of ten and

twenty, and of all that we are obliged to store confusedly away in our memories!

And do not say, "Yes, and what remains of it. . . ."

If an adult remembered and had ready command of all the ideas that were familiar to him when he was preparing for his examinations, he would undoubtedly make a name for himself as being extraordinarily learned.

A famous novelist has written books on psycho-physiology. Well, all his psycho-physiology, which has given him such a reputation as a philosopher and thinker, is a little less than one must know to pass the second part of the examination for a baccalaureate in the arts.

Consider also that there is not a man of letters who would not be refused a degree in letters tomorrow, and that you could count on one hand the members of the Institute who, if they were asked to appear at once and without preparation, could answer successfully all the questions required for a school diploma.

There is an enormous difference, however, between those who no longer know anything and those who have never known anything. The former have not, like the latter, the fetich of science which betrays those who are self-taught. And there is no danger that they will discover the Mediterranean;

for, even supposing that they have very probably forgotten its exact shape and position, together with all its ports and islands, as well as the names of all the rivers that flow into it, at least they know that it exists, and that is the main point.

The watch you carry in your pocket has not run for a long time and perhaps you have even broken the small hand, but at least you have a watch, which is always better than to have none, or only the chain, or not to own anything at all.

Those who are self-taught always begin by buying a watch-chain and immediately imagine that they know the time. A broken watch is as powerless to tell us the time as a simple watch-chain, but it only needs to be repaired and wound.

All the knowledge with which we set out in life is commonly lumped together under the name of "baggage." One may carry all his baggage in a knotted handkerchief. Another may take at least three or four trunks of "novelties."

But of what use are all these trunks if we have lost their keys?

Memory is the key that opens all trunks and drawers. For in addition to our baggage, they say that our brain is also well stored. It is, indeed, a piece of furniture with drawers.

There is one drawer always open, for handkerchiefs and socks, the indispensable ideas for daily

conduct, for all that concerns our habits and our profession. Then there is the drawer of general ideas, a drawer in which there is plenty of room, for one can never comment sufficiently on the small number of ideas that suffice for our daily needs. And then there are the secret drawers, which they say memory does not open but inspiration does—drawers for which the owner of the furniture pretends you need something besides a key, such as the pronouncement of some cabalistic formula. . . .

But make no mistake, they are always drawers with more or less complicated locks. . . .

So instead of the reliable old key, that is, the prosaic and practical key of memory, one has recourse to the pick of fancy, to inspiration and its skeleton key.

The man above all others for drawers is the orator. You marvel at the riches he squanders so profusely. He empties one drawer, then another and another. He opens this and closes that. What stores he has! It is a prodigal cupboard. But how embarrassed and crestfallen he would be if he mislaid his key or dropped it!

We have all seen the lamentable spectacle of an orator who, at the finest point in his speech, suddenly lost the thread of what he was saying. The drawer would no longer open! And a mere nothing is enough to bring this about, a grain of dust on the key or in the hole.

I shall never forget a certain famous writer who, at the end of a banquet in his honor, wished to thank the guests, his admirers and disciples, and entertain them with a brilliant improvisation in which he could give free rein to his eloquence and his emotions.

First one drawer, then another, then another . . . who could have possessed more magnificent stores than our celebrated writer! The harmonious and well balanced phrases succeeded one another and everyone, the orator most of all, was lulled deliciously by that cadence and harmony.

And then, suddenly, nothing. The orator had stopped short in the middle of a sentence and there he was, helpless, unable to finish it or to go on. His neighbor at table had merely dropped a small spoon and this single, unexpected noise, recalling him to reality, had made him notice that he did not know what was in the drawers he was emptying before us with such liberality and ostentation. He noticed that he was uttering sentences as his memory or his imagination dictated them to him without being able to distinguish them from one another, or even to penetrate their meaning. How, then, could he go on, *since he did not know what he was saying?*

We laugh at a man who centers his desires and activities on collecting spoons and snuff-boxes, but

every one of us collects ideas just as the collector collects spoons and snuff-boxes. That is, we linger only over those ideas that appeal to our tastes or to our occupations. We limit ourselves to a series or to a group of specialized ideas outside of which nothing exists for us and through which we attempt to see and judge everything, just as the collector is concerned with the handicraft of centuries only in connection with the decoration and ornamentation of snuff-boxes and with the shape of spoons.

So the principal source of error in our judgments comes from a lack of balance between what we know very well, almost too well, and everything we do not know or have forgotten. What is called a professional bias is merely this and we find it at the basis of all our habits of mind.

For many months after the war it was impossible to take a walk without being less impressed by the picturesque charm and rural beauty of the countryside than by its tactical advantages, which occurred to us immediately and in spite of ourselves. We noted, for instance, which slopes and emplacements were suitable for a battery of artillery.

We must also admit that our minds always work through associations of ideas, and when an idea that is apparently quite mad, unexpected, and ridiculous appears, nevertheless it is attached to the same chain; a few links have simply dropped off and been lost.

The mechanism of the association of ideas lends itself so readily to a wide variety of combinations that it is quite natural for us to be baffled by it sometimes, nor does it disdain to resort on occasion to the wretched trick of a pun.

To make sure of this I have often thought one might start a little social game which would consist of pronouncing one word, no matter which, in a gathering and after a minute of silence asking each player to write on a scrap of paper the first word that came into his head.

Evidently the words written down would all derive from the word uttered, however remote and dissimilar they appeared, and the interest of the game would consist in establishing the missing links and in seeking to show by what road, through exactly what succession, what association of ideas, one had been able to get from one word to the other, to all these others. . . .

If I pronounce the word *father,* for example, do not be surprised if it appears on the scraps of paper as Béziers, Massachusetts, and Deauville. *Father* (*père*), a pair of stockings (pun), bare legs, sunbaths, *Deauville. Father,* the Father of Victory, Clemenceau, splendidly long life (like those sometimes reported in the papers, like this woman of a hundred and three who still dances the Charleston or that man of more than a hundred and twelve who is thinking of marrying again. But people like

that always live in some remote spot like *Massachusetts*). *Father,* the filial piety of Shem and Japheth for their father Noah when he was drunk, drunkenness, vineyards and vintages, *Béziers* . . .

The mechanism for reaching such an end is unconscious, and we ourselves are not aware of what controls it in the obscure depths of our personality.

That is why we cannot force ourselves to be either gay or sad. A man is naturally gay or naturally sad according to whether his succession of ideas ends, willy nilly, in gay or in sad images.

We believe that all initiative in the association of ideas has probably been more completely suppressed in officers, from the very day they entered the military academy, than in any other men, because of their incessant submission to martial discipline.

And I have heard cited as an example the case of the officer who becomes Minister of War.

Such an officer is, of course, a general officer. That is, for more than twenty years he has been accustomed to be answered by "Yes, Major! Certainly, Colonel! Exactly, General!"

Here he is, his brief-case under his arm, on the platform of the House and suddenly the invariable assent to which he is accustomed, the "Yes," the "Good," the "Exactly" are changed into uproar

and furious denials, into protestations, vociferations, abuse and variegated animal cries.

How could you expect his intellectual mechanism not to be immediately deranged by such abnormal treatment? And why be surprised if, nine times out of ten, the general as Minister of War either upsets everything or else dismisses everyone? The conclusion of course is that in spite of everything and in any situation whatever it would be better to entrust the ministry of war to a civilian.

Another conclusion is that we are slaves only to our habits of mind; it is they that always direct our conduct and order our existence. And our habits of mind depend not on the mind itself but on an imperious sequence, on a rhythm that is natural to it.

Just as when you sit down at the piano and strike a succession of chords, weaving in here and there fragments of popular airs from this dance or that opera, it is noticeable that you almost always end with the grand air from *Manon,* by Massenet. . . .

You believe that you are improvising, that you are obeying some inner music, but it is Manon that sings. . . .

Whether you obey a literary or scientific turn of mind there is nothing to boast of, for in either case you obey. We should not imagine that either way is superior to the other, for when they chance

to seek the same ends they yield to the same necessities and submit to the same abasement.

When a certain great scholar, a lofty philosopher and a fine poet, for example, became ambitious for a political career, the poet became ridiculous and the scholar drew up bills worthy of the under-veterinary surgeon of the chief city of some canton. And to quote an actual case, there is nothing more dreadful, threadbare, and deplorable than the electoral circulars of Ernest Renan, candidate for the Seine and Marne, preserved in the archives of the town hall at Melun.

Politics are made for men and by men; that is why they are incompatible with any ideal whatever. And the poet, philosopher, or scholar who loses the sense of the ideal has nothing left and is nothing.

Whether you call him a politician or think you give him more dignity by referring to him as a statesman, whoever takes part in politics is engaged in just such a job as selling spices or drawing up insurance policies. Do you imagine that you can turn yourself suddenly into an insurance agent or a grocer and immediately make your fortune as such?

Between 1914 and 1918 I heard so many rash young men, justly irritated at certain faults and weaknesses of our members of Parliament, protest,

"Just wait until the war ends and we get back! We shall enter Parliament and all that will have to change! . . ."

Some of those who came back did enter Parliament and so far nothing has changed.

They appear like amateurs, certainly full of ardor and good intentions, but still amateurs, beside the old war-horses, the professionals.

There are party labels, just as there are trademarks on chocolates, candles, and preserves, and we continue to buy our stores at the same big groceries.

The only one of my childhood friends who ever became a minister was already preparing for it at the time of his first law examination; and at the age when one sings the romance of Cherubin or Fortunio he was arranging meetings, for the Lodge of the chief town of his district, on the relations of Church and State, the misdeeds of the Jesuits, the regulation of mines and the lowering of duties.

As for another man whom I also knew at the beginning of his career, and before he played a sinister but determining rôle in our country's affairs, when I asked him why he advocated the party and doctrines least conformable with his education and his usual preferences, he confessed to me one evening, in a moment of expansion, "Well, my dear fellow, it's because I want to be a minister."

He has actually been a minister, and perhaps he is one even yet.

At least, you say, there is a realist, and when he is trusted to repair the social edifice he will not build on clouds.

Don't be deceived! The man who is most prudent in organizing his own future and administering his own fortune, who is keenest and fiercest in defense of his own interests, often shows the most ingenuous confidence in the most foolish Utopias the moment it is a question of the fortune and interest of his neighbor and even more when it concerns the collective interests of the nation, the State.

Have you ever visited an asylum for the insane? It is a singularly painful and distressing visit and it will increase your distress to meet there men who will speak and think just as you and I do and with whom you can talk for more than an hour without hearing anything from their lips but what is calm and sensible.

Yes, but let the conversation suddenly touch upon King Louis-Philippe, as the director of the asylum, seeing your bewilderment, advises you to do, and the man speaking to you will grow pale, will be seized with nervous trembling and will begin to stammer incoherent threats. He is convinced that, after having murdered his grandfather, King Louis-Philippe has pursued him with a tenacious

and terrible hatred and has even set the police upon him. The same frenzy will occur in the case of another at the mere mention of Queen Victoria, who wishes to cheat him out of an inheritance. . . .

So it is with all the insane, though they may be reasonable on all other matters. There is one sensitive point which you need merely touch in order to unleash their folly, the fissure through which their reason abruptly escapes.

In the same way, the man who wanted to be a minister, who wanted it at no matter what price, even to the betraying of his past, his friends, his teachers, and his family, this man knew perfectly what he wanted for himself. It was when there was a question of what he wanted for others that the fissure appeared and that he uttered pell-mell words with the least relation to reality, and yet so dear to his realism.

Am I speaking of a madman? But no doubt that would not have prevented him from being a minister.

In such matters many pretend to be mad, like those sly merchants who pretend to be deaf when you propose a sale to them, so as to oblige you to repeat the offer and so that during the time gained they may weigh and reflect on it the better. Only it sometimes happens that these pretenders become really deaf, just as children who make ugly faces are threatened by their mothers that to punish them

the Holy Virgin will leave them as they are, in the midst of their grimace, their mouth crooked, their eyes squinting.

Are we not all a little, indeed more or less, mad? If there is nothing more alarming than to read a medical dictionary, in which we immediately discover symptoms of every illness in ourselves, a treatise on mental disorders is no more reassuring.

It is terrifying to find how many forms of insanity threaten us, and have even attacked us without our having observed them.

One of these lesions, and perhaps the most common, is revealed, it appears, in the mania shared by many for numbering and counting everything—smoking chimneys, open windows, taxis waiting at a station.

I once happened to attend a funeral seated beside a friend whose eyes I saw slowly fill with tears. I was astonished at this mark of feeling, for the person who was being buried was in no way dear to us, and I was just thinking that, if he had tears in his eyes, this death must remind him of closer and dearer deaths, perhaps his own. Then, leaning toward me, my friend murmured in a low voice, "There are sixty-two candles lighted on the altar." Then I understood that staring fixedly at all these candles had tired his eyes and brought water into them at the fortieth or fiftieth candle.

Far from being as touched as I had imagined,

how completely he had remained master of himself, indifferent not only to this death but to the idea of death itself, keeping his mind free to the point of counting the candles!

Yet if we were to believe treatises on mental maladies, this collector of data on lighted candles would by that very act have demonstrated a form of insanity.

Rather, did he not count the candles to resist the idea of death just as we also count to fight against sleeplessness, and count again when they put the ether cone over us before an operation? How far shall I count before losing consciousness and going to sleep? We count so as not to think of anything, one, two, three, eight, sixteen, thirty-two . . .

We have formed the habit of resorting to numbers to relax or to stop our intellectual mechanism, and no doubt this habit leads us to believe that arithmetic has nothing to do with intelligence, in spite of the most ingenious problems about moving trains and about faucets.

As a proof of the low rank of arithmetic in the hierarchy of knowledge, they point out that the first thing we have been able to teach animals is to count, for we admit that there are learned animals, though no animal poets or philosophers, at least not as men understand poetry and philosophy.

And yet, does not a philosophy of numbers exist? And in poetry is not an exact rhythm, even more exact than in music, at the basis of all versifying? One, two, three, four, five, six, says the majestic Alexandrine. The first thing we demand of regular verse is the exact number of its syllables. Pure poetry, no pure arithmetic! Versemaking is a problem in arithmetic. . . .

When, ingenuous and timid, you attempt your first love poem, which is plucking the petals of a daisy, "She loves me a little, much, passionately, not at all . . ." what you are really doing is finding out if the sum total of the petals of that daisy is exactly divisible by five.

IX. "IT'S AMUSING"

A certain man who had discovered from his own experience that "there are years when one doesn't feel like working" was one day inquiring after a comrade whom he no longer met at the café or out walking. "What is he doing?" he asked. . . . "He is working," they told him. The next day there was the same answer and also the day after, "He is working."

So on the fourth day, when they had told him again that his friend was still working, our man exclaimed, "He had better look out. If he goes on like that he won't be good for anything else!"

It is a real superiority and a great strength to know how to amuse yourself, how to balance your work and play, to relax your body and divert your mind. But you must not reach the point where you spend more energy on your amusements than on your work. Amusement should not become itself an undertaking and a task.

There are, of course, men who make a profession of amusement. But how tired they must be by evening!

How tired he must be when he gets home, that

amusing fellow of your acquaintance, who from his youth has spent his time entertaining others and organizing fêtes, who has never had any other occupation and who cuts a figure in the world as the professional life of the party! When he returns home, when he is alone and looks at himself in the mirror, how tired and sad his face must appear to himself, and he must wonder with terror how long he will have to go on setting off fireworks and leading cotillions!

Suppose that it were really funny to throw streamers and little celluloid balls into the air and to wear a paper crown on your head, how could it possibly continue to be funny regularly every night at midnight?

Even the clowns retire. An old clown who is no longer amusing is heart-breaking. The sound of the slap given him is lost when there are bursts of laughter. If there is no laughter, alas! it is only a slap, brutal, painful, shameful as a slap. . . .

I once saw a clown in a circus who, instead of wearing the traditional costume, a too large and grotesque suit with a ridiculous cravat and an enormous vest, had put on an impeccable frock-coat and appeared dressed exactly like a gentleman, a man of the world, so that it seemed as if a real gentleman were receiving the slaps and the kicks of the other clowns. At each cuff or kick he would assume an air of wounded dignity that

was the wittiest and funniest thing in the world. The funniest or the most painful, for the spectators were not slow in taking a dislike to this gentleman, who passed his time receiving kicks and cuffs and who resembled the spectators themselves too closely. They were shocked, annoyed. . . .

Yet a game that imitates life is good, but only on condition that it is meant as a game. This is true of children whose games are merely an imitation of the work of grown persons.

It has always seemed to me that the most ingenious man in the world would be the man who should invent a game that would induce the players, by way of amusement, to sweep their rooms, cook their food, and weed their gardens. They even ought to pay for being so well amused, pay the inventor of the game whose tremendous ingenuity could never be sufficiently admired and rewarded.

It is surprising that games of chance have been chosen as typical games to the point where the word *game,* used by itself, means nothing but them, and especially those, such as baccarat and roulette, in which fortunes are swallowed up. So if you speak of a man as a gamester it is quite clear that you do not mean he spends his time playing at baseball or golf.

It is natural that the idea of games, in the pro-

found meaning of amusement, should be especially applied to those games of chance that absorb our entire attention, so that when one is deep in them nothing else exists and the earth may stop turning for all we care. This was quite evident in the war where no amount of shelling could stop a game of poker and where at the hope of four aces or a royal flush all cares and all thought of immediate danger completely vanished.

What characterizes a game is that one no longer worries about anything, one no longer thinks about anything except the game itself. It is also characterized by the extreme mediocrity, the extreme stupidity of the aim imposed on the player, of the result he must strive to attain.

It will be readily admitted, I imagine, that it is indeed commonplace and stupid to triumph because on adding up the points on one's cards one has obtained the number 9, or the number closest to 9, or because one has fortunately chanced to prefer red to black or black to red.

For that matter, do you suppose there ought to be anything to hold the attention of a reasonable, grown man in the act of pushing a little hard rubber ball towards a certain number of holes? Or in sending a tennis ball, somewhat larger but softer than a golf ball, over a net with a racquet?

Even for the player of billiards, is it such an exploit to knock three balls together after a certain

fashion and to direct them with a long stick, that it is worth so much application and study?

And you will be doing very well indeed when you have knocked down all those ninepins.

All this, I repeat, does not bear thinking about, but I also repeat that it is play precisely for this reason.

Is fishing with a rod a game? Yes, on the express condition that the fisherman does not care about catching fish. Then fishing becomes a delightful game and one of the pleasantest ways of diverting the mind, especially since the diversion usually has an attractive landscape as a setting and is soothed by the fresh murmur of water.

An attractive landscape, from which you will profit as you do not from a golf course or a tennis court, for the court may be surrounded by the pleasantest shade and the golf course may contain the most charming lawns and the most perfect little valleys to delight the eye, but you will see neither valleys, lawn nor shade. You will see only balls and holes.

Does anyone pretend that when you fish with a line you see only the wet leader and the bobbin as it floats or sinks? You see them without seeing them, for they in no way prevent you from musing and singing, and revery is the most delicate and delicious of amusements.

There are two ways of forgetting the humdrum

of everyday life. One is to think of nothing and the other is to think of something else. Of something else, no matter what, but something different that allows you to escape, to go elsewhere—no matter where, but elsewhere! That is revery and, if you please, it is fishing with a line.

Are you impatient? Go fishing. Are you melancholy? Go fishing. Do you consider people stupid and wicked, men jealous, women coquettes, life difficult? Go fishing, my friend, go fishing.

And since it is well understood that you are not to bother with catching fish, watch peacefully the flowing water and the clouds reflected in it.

There is nothing so peaceful as to watch clouds forming and reforming giant images in the sky, or in the water that reflects the sky, as the caprice of an artist draws, rubs out and draws again on the pages of an album forms of gods or horsemen. And see how, at a stroke of the brush, the horns on the faun's forehead become the prow of a ship and the ship a flock of running sheep.

How can one ever be bored if one is interested in the shapes of clouds and in the majesty of their slow or hurried flight? What race of snails across a garden table or along a wall compares to this race of clouds through space? Hello! will that little white cloud catch up with the heavy one over there, laden with rain?

And if there are no clouds, is it nothing to stare into the blue depths until you are dizzy, as you used to enjoy sitting for hours by the motionless sea?

Later, when the friendly moon appears, I advise you to scan its shining face, where with a little imagination and perseverance you will easily find the delicate profile of a dark woman or the bright features of a blond one or the silhouette of a man carrying wood. A man with bent shoulders, standing between a fair and a dark woman, what an admirable synoptic picture of the human race, briefly inscribed on that luminous circle! And why should you wish for any other inhabitants of the moon?

The enjoyment of natural spectacles, which is a pleasure within the reach of all, is unfortunately not to the taste of everyone. In spite of the declarations and advice of the poets, a heart must be singularly sad and weary to appreciate the sweet sound of rain falling on the roof or on the earth, and yet the rain is pretty, just as a ray of sunshine is pretty and a rainbow is almost too pretty, pretty as a postcard.

Rain, sun, rainbow, yet you can enjoy them in the city quite as well as in the country, for all the sights of nature are not, as one would like to suppose, necessarily and uniquely part of the country.

Country pleasures, city pleasures; some men are happy anywhere, some are happy nowhere! Each one carries within himself the source of his own happiness. But it is also true to say that there are certain pleasures of which no one thinks unless he is prevented from obtaining them. That is, city pleasures are especially tempting in the country and country ones in the city.

To rise early, walk in the dew, pick mushrooms or bring back hawthorn boughs as white as a bride's veil or baskets full of blackberries as black and glistening as the eyes of a gold finch, then in the evening to stretch out in the sweet-smelling hay! For when we evoke the pleasures of the country we mix all the seasons. . . . Is it possible, we wonder, that people live in the country and do not stretch out every evening in the fragrant hay?

We forget the number of Parisians who do not go every week to the Louvre museum, who perhaps have never been there at all or to the Sainte Chapelle.

Quite often we are blind to the sights and charms of Nature until the age when we notice that there is undoubtedly less variety in the minds of men and the gowns of women than there is in sunsets, in shifting daylight, in the seasons of woods and fields.

Until then, if we are interested in Nature, we insist that it shall at least be animated and inhabited.

To tell the truth, it is the houses that interest us first. Only we should like to know all about them and for that we ought to be able to lift off their roofs.

How many times in a train, with your face pressed against the window, have you envied the calm country houses and villages you passed, which grew bright as the night fell! You envied the silence and peace that surrounded them, you thought of the great peace, without passion or fever, of those who lived there.

Alas, there is passion and fever wherever there are men and women, wherever they live, even when it is much further off and more solitary than there along the railroad.

Behind each of those windows where a light burns are love and hate, and who knows what drama is preparing or has taken place?

And when you cross that little deserted station, the thin bell of which sounds so drolly, who knows if the station-master has not just surprised his wife with a lover and shot them both with a revolver? (Without considering that almost all these houses have radios now—see all those antennæ on the roofs —and that all the orchestras and jazz bands of Europe meet there.)

I once had to travel through a certain province on Mardi Gras, on a slow train that stopped drearily at every station and, once stopped, could not seem

to make up its mind to set out again, as if protesting against the necessity of travelling on Mardi Gras.

At one especially lonely little station, far from every dwelling—one of those stations about which one wonders why they are there at all, what facetious or paradoxical engineer has built or rather forgotten them there—I saw get down, alone and unawaited, an old woman in heavy mourning, her crêpe veils all covered with confetti.

Apparently, on going to the station in the neighboring town where she had taken the train, she had found herself surrounded by a crowd of masqueraders and had not been able to escape the rain of confetti that was not intended for her.

But here, in the open country, all alone, and with nothing else to recall the carnival crowd, all alone with this confetti on her black veils, she suddenly appeared like the painful and absurd symbol of this village tragedy of which we are ignorant but which continues and completes the tragedy of towns and is linked to the universal human tragedy that is always and everywhere the same.

Lift up the roofs of the houses, did we say? We should like to lift up people's brain-pans.

While sitting on the terrace of a café, have you sometimes taken to watching the passers-by, as you would watch the comings and goings of a swarm

of ants over an anthill? That, too, is excellent amusement, for in watching others you forget yourself.

At first you will be struck by the small number of types among men and women, all of whom seem to have been turned out wholesale.

Less different than ants, you ask? But if you were an ant you would probably be aware of certain peculiarities of other ants, as you are now aware of those of men.

And the agitation of these passers-by, as you watch them with cold reflection and do not share in it, does it seem less vain and ridiculous than that of the ants?

Where are they going? What needs and passions animate them?

It is not impossible to imagine. Just as their faces are formed of a certain limited number of features, which reappear over and over again, so a certain number of sentimental combinations, also quite restricted, take place in the soul.

The game of combinations is what dramatists and novelists use to amuse you, and what you desire most in a novel or a play is to compare the inventions of the author with your own, to see whether the author at his work table has seen and imagined as you have done on the café terrace.

The best plays, the best novels, or at least those that please us best, are those that we should have

created ourselves "if we had been writers." Every author has a hundred times had persons pointed out to him, been told stories concerning them and then had it said to him, "If I were a writer like you I should make a book or a play out of that! . . ."

What assures the success of a book or a play is having the reader declare, "How true that is!" That is supreme praise in the mouth of a reader or spectator—"How true that is!"—which means, "How exactly everything they show me here conforms to the idea I had already formed of it, to my vision, my experience, my imagination!"

The critical point of view is quite otherwise. . . . It disputes according to theories, rules, and principles which in no way concern the public.

The frequent disagreement between the critic and the usual reader or spectator arises because the reader reads and the spectator goes to the play to amuse himself, which is not at all, or at least not always the case with the critic.

For the most part, readers and spectators sum up their appreciation thus, "It's amusing," or "It's not amusing," and you have often been surprised that this same epithet *amusing* appeared suitable to both a vaudeville and a play, to the gloomiest tale as well as to the lightest and most frivolous sketch. . . . "It's amusing!"

I wish to emphasize again that the public in

relation to the theater or the novel is like a schoolboy on his vacation; he wants relaxation and amusement. If he has to dispute he gets no amusement out of it. Discussion may be amusing but it is fatiguing. The public is not willing to be fatigued.

And if you point out the indisputable success of certain serious and even tiresome authors, a success far superior to that of certain other authors who are gay or at least think themselves so, this has occurred because the public, in taking up these serious authors, reasons after the following fashion, "He is a thinker, he will think for me." That, too, is a way of resting. You rest on the serious author the responsibility of thinking in your place.

Someone else can think for you, but no one else can laugh for you. So if the gay author has tried to make you laugh and you have not laughed, he explains in vain. He has lost the trick.

I should always advise a young author to choose serious writing in which he will be able to make a career for himself far more easily than in comedy. There are no misunderstood comic authors, for if they were not understood they would cease to be comic.

In nearly every quarter of Paris you can meet with an old woman called the "neighborhood idiot." I say an old woman, though she is really neither old nor young. Actually she is ageless. The ridic-

ulous faded finery in which she dresses is ageless also and shares in all the fashions that have followed one another for years. Laces and embroideries from the Islands, a looped-up skirt and a taffeta scarf, mitts that do not match and a little torn umbrella with a broken ivory handle. . . .

Our imagination, which we call the "household mad-cap," bears a singular resemblance to this neighborhood idiot. People turn and grow sad as it passes, or they are touched, or they laugh.

Yet nothing in its air or in its finery is either very comic or very touching in itself. The imagination clothes itself, like the neighborhood idiot, with all the left-overs of all periods.

It is the ensemble that appears either pathetic or comic, the unexpected union of dancing slippers with a mountaineer's stockings, this feathered hat with this raincloak. . . .

But the neighborhood idiot does not walk abroad to amuse, to frighten or to touch us. She walks as unconscious of pitying glances as of laughter, while our imagination is well aware of what it does, and deliberately tricks out our minds in old finery destined for laughter or tears.

It does not always produce the effect expected, but the important thing is to produce some effect. All you have to do is to say that you wished to make us laugh if we laugh and weep if we weep. Nothing is hopeless except indifference.

If you are not afraid of fatigue, you can make use of your own imagination instead of the imagination of others to amuse yourself. Thus the silent moving pictures demand a greater collaboration on your part than does the theater, for as the characters appear on the screen you have to imagine not only the motives for their actions but the words they would utter if they were alive.

At times, the author of the film seemed to rely on you alone to supplement it, like the orator who, without finishing his sentence, adds "Et cetera, et cetera."

Now and then, for example, to show that years have passed and events have gone wrong, the screen shows you only masses of clouds. It is for you to imagine what goes on behind those clouds, what dramas, what mourning. . . .

Under these conditions, how is it possible for people to pretend that there is no more restful spectacle than the moving pictures?

The truth is that they seek no further than the screen shows them, not even beyond those simple masses of clouds. They let the characters say what they will, and consequently, if they wish, they let them say nothing at all, which after all is less irritating and tiresome than, as so often happens at the theater, to hear them say the very opposite of what you hoped or supposed they would say, or

something so different that it seems vain and ridiculous.

Intellectual fatigue springs from contradiction and our imagination, left to its own devices, is never contradicted. It will never be contradicted except by facts, and when the facts are imaginary, as they are here, what do we risk?

One idea is essential to any sort of amusement, that is its uselessness. If we imagined that this thing which amuses us had to serve any other purpose it would no longer be amusing.

The same is true of what we call accomplishments. All our pleasure comes from the fact that we need not apply them to any direct end, that here pleasure comes before skill so definitely that, though I shall not try to prove that wood-cutting is an art, there are men by whom cutting wood is considered an accomplishment.

How many times have I envied those Italian workmen who decorate the floors of vestibules, bathrooms and dining rooms with little cubes of many colored marbles! How amusing it must be, I thought, to make mosaics! . . . And then I would console myself with a kaleidoscope which at least left no trace and appeared somewhat like the art of making mosaics transformed into an accomplishment.

Of all the men I have known the one who amused himself best, who seems to me to have discovered

the very essence of play, was a man who, having worked very hard, had finally retired and bought a lathe that had been perfected for piercing, filing, boring and tapping wood and iron.

He set up a piece of wood and a piece of iron on his lathe and, turning the lathe energetically, he pierced, filed, bored and tapped. He turned and turned until there was nothing left, absolutely nothing, neither wood nor iron. . . .

X. HEART AND MIND

There never was a writer or a speaker who, having described the qualities of the mind in the first part of his speech, could resist evoking in the second part the qualities of the heart. The moment you speak of the mind, the heart hastens up to keep it company, and vice versa.

Is it better to have a good heart or a good mind? A foolish question, for it is very unlikely that you will ever have to decide.

It appears, however, that any man who might—incredibly—be allowed the choice would be sure to affirm loudly his preferences for the qualities of the heart. Yet I am quite sure that in his heart he would desire the others.

We always flatter ourselves that we have excellent hearts, but we are convinced that one rises in the world by means of the mind. You may say, "I am too easily touched." You never say, "I am too intelligent."

One thing, however, appears certain. You can exercise your intelligence but not your tenderheartedness. The more you use your intelligence the more it develops, while your tenderheartedness becomes blunted with use until there is none of it left.

The intelligence is like the five sous of the Wandering Jew. When they are spent there are always some left. But when tenderheartedness is gone it is entirely gone.

Remember, then, that your heart is not inexhaustible, do not squander it right and left, do not feel sorry for everything, do not be stirred by no matter what, if you do not wish to find yourself, some fine day, with your eyes dry and your heart empty.

But above all beware of having your mind the enemy of your heart, or at least of having it dislike and distrust it.

Your mind is your bad angel, all pride, malice and seduction.

Observe how it scouts your heart, under cover of great respect and the most sincere esteem. Does it say that So-and-so is good? Then it is understood that he is stupid. Happy indeed are the poor in spirit and not merely in the kingdom of heaven. . . .

The triumph of the mind is egoism, but egoism is only for dupes. There is no such thing as egoistical happiness; one is happy only with others and through others. Are you going to wish for a wave of asphyxiating gas because you are the only one who happens to own a gas-mask? Even with your gas-mask you cannot help seeing that it would be

better for you and for everyone if there were no asphyxiating gas!

The true egoist, that is, the really ingenious and agreeable egoist, is the man who desires to live, who makes every effort to live in the midst of happy people, so that the plaints of the unhappy may not assail his ears. Otherwise he just stops them up. But what sort of life is it when you live with cotton in your ears?

I do not believe that people are ever modest about their intelligence. That is, intelligent people never pretend to behave like idiots. But there is certainly such a thing as modesty about one's tenderheartedness. When you reproach someone with, "Have you no heart?" it is quite possible that he has voluntarily incurred your reproach by deliberately hiding his easily moved heart.

On the other hand, we should always distrust the excessive demonstrativeness of those who always have tears in their eyes and hearts in their hands.

Have you ever noticed that these very demonstrative persons are usually very fat?

It is true that when a bid is made for our sympathy and confidence it is usually by those whom they call in the theater "fatties." Do not give way too much to this first impression. What a mistake you make when you say that sympathy cannot be controlled! It is always the more or

less conscious result of a series of former experiences. A whole generation of fat men should in the past have proved themselves more tender-hearted than the corresponding generation of thin men!

But striking yourself on the chest does not make you sincere, and besides, real sincerity usually dislikes making use of these gestures that prove nothing. In the same way, before some sad and pitiful spectacle the ultra-sensitive person will exclaim, "I am too sensitive to see that"—and go away. I prefer the less sensitive person who consents to endure the sight of misery and strives to remedy it.

The irony of others too often forces us to wear the mask of indifference.

What strange and dangerous educators are those who attempt to destroy in a child what they consider an excess of sensibility! "That child," they say, "is too soft-hearted. He will be unhappy in life."

And so that he may not be unhappy in life, they try to break his unregulated and excessive impulses. They point out that they are ridiculous and make fun of him.

Yes, of course, it is ridiculous to make up verses, especially for a small cousin. . . . No doubt.

But are not your irony and the fear of ridicule going to make him lose all faculty of enthusiasm

and all spontaneity? Will you not dry up his heart under pretext of disciplining it?

You are afraid that those strawberry beds will be invaded by weeds, and that the berries, stifled by the invading gluttons, will never ripen. But do not trample the beds and crush the young plants in order to pull up the weeds.

Which directs the will, the mind or the heart? But you exclaim hastily that one cannot ask such a question, that giving way to one's warm-hearted impulses implies in itself a complete abdication of the will.

In this case you too often confuse heart and instinct, just as the privileges of reasoning and the benefits of reflection are always attributed to the mind. In short, many oppose spontaneity of heart to wise and lucid calculations of the mind.

Wherever you have calculation you have the possibility of error, but on the other hand, are you quite sure that the heart, which does not calculate, is never mistaken?

At least, there will always be the same difference between mistakes of the heart and of the mind that there is between fraud and a mistake in bookkeeping. The accountant who discovers that the total of his figures is inexact, cannot claim that he has been cheated. . . .

The mind is our accountant, but the heart has not been trained in a business school.

We have set out in a motor-boat that is also equipped with sails. Let us say that the mind drives the motor and the heart fills the sails. And to complete the image, install the will as rudder.

What we need most to keep the boat on a regular course is a good motor.

Besides the regularity of the motor-mind we have the caprices of the heart and the uncertainty of navigating with sails.

But even a motor may get out of order and a broken-down motor is only a heavy weight which it would be much better to throw into the water so as to lighten the ship.

Then you would be very glad to have the sail and your heart to waft it along.

Your mind may play you false, but if you have a heart it will never fail you.

Are there really men who have no heart? So they say, or rather there are men who would like you to think so. When people pretend they have no heart, you may be sure they have had one once. Otherwise, how would they know that they had no heart? On the contrary, men without intelligence never know they lack it.

Qualities of the heart, qualities of the mind!—Do you see those two trees in your orchard? The fruits of one of them ripen within reach of your hand and, when they are ripe, drop at a touch. You have to climb high to reach the fruits of the

other. Fruits of the heart, fruits of the mind! . . . And some of these fruits of the mind are not even hanging on the tree but suspended from the top of a greased pole, so that it is not enough to climb to the top of the pole, you must have been the first to make the difficult ascent.

Qualities of the heart can never take the place of qualities of the mind, any more than those of the mind can replace those of the heart; they grow on different trees. And suppose that you have made an error from a distance and have mistaken apples for nectarines, why they are still apples, for nectarines will not grow on apple trees.

It is true, however, that the mind sometimes controls the heart, which never controls the mind.

Certain gestures and actions may spring directly from the heart but the mind adds to their value and increases their significance.

I was present one evening at a public meeting, the last held by a candidate for election after a long campaign and the evening before the voting. The voice of this candidate had grown hoarse from proclaiming each day and several times a day for more than a month his love for the voters of his district and for the Republic.

Nevertheless he did not wish to conclude his speech, his last speech, without showing that he still had enough voice left to sing the Marseillaise, in which he invited us to join him.

The platform on which he was speaking was decorated with a cluster of flags and just as he was exhorting "the sons of the Fatherland" a little off the key, and assuring them that "the day of glory had arrived," he snatched one of the flags from the cluster with a fine gesture, waved it aloft and no longer needed to sing as he was wrapped in the tricolor folds which were quite enough to arouse and keep in time the enthusiasm of the delighted and conquered audience.

It was only when the last notes of the national hymn had died away and the last voter had departed with them that my man, still sweating, disordered and untidy, whispered in my ear with evident satisfaction this ingenuous confidence, "That was a good idea about the flag!"

He was sincere but, as they say and as you see, he had never lost sight of his goal. That is the first duty of navigators. They must know that one cannot find one's direction with the heart and that, though it is more generous and valiant, it does not take the place of a compass.

As for pretending that the heart has its reasons which reason, that is the mind, does not recognize and cannot understand, this underestimates the mind without doing great honor to the heart. There are no inexplicable, incomprehensible acts willed and ordered by the heart. The mind always under-

stands perfectly what the heart decides and whither it leads us.

What it occasionally does not understand is that, at the command of the heart, we will perform an act that is comprehensible but absurd to the mind. The mind always understands the heart's reasons, but does not always understand why we should obey them.

It does not understand, or, to be more exact, it deplores and ridicules such action, and it will accompany it with an irritated and ironic commentary. It will, for example, be the accompaniment to Don Juan's serenade, that accompaniment which jests and mocks under cover of the exalted song. In a jazz orchestra you can hear the same sort of thing in the facetious jests of the saxophones or the bassoons. The saxophone jokes, banters and jeers but follows the measure all the same. The mind is the jazz saxophone led by the heart.

That is why we have come, little by little, to call briefly intelligence what is really only a kind of wit and not even the rudiments of thought—just a certain fashion of thinking and expressing oneself that is both rapid and ingenious.

In the same way we will choose a few of the elements that go to make up our delicacy of feeling, which is supposed to reside in the heart, and we will choose only those which we might attribute to the heart without the need of specifying any

others, generosity, courage, love: qualities of the heart.

Have we not come to write seriously and to repeat with complacency that "great thoughts come from the heart," while the true business of the heart is precisely to think of nothing so that the movements and acts it determines shall be essentially unreflecting?

I do not say that if you begin by thinking you will not be loving or courageous or generous, but you will be so differently and no longer merely through an impulse of the heart.

It is true that the mind, which always manages to get the best of a bargain and is always sure of having the last word—since it is the mind that is consulted, that decides and dictates our judgments, the mind that manufactures words, gives them what significance it wishes and uses them at its pleasure —the mind would like to persuade us that unreflecting generosity is not generosity but waste, that unreflecting courage is not courage but temerity. As for unreflecting love, there is no particular expression for it, it is pure and simple madness.

It is the heart that advises you to share your fortune with the poor and the mind intervenes to observe that, whatever may be the size of your fortune, granted the number of the poor you will ruin yourself without enriching them and there will only be one poor man the more.

It was when he listened only to his heart that Don Quixote set out, lance in hand, against the windmills.

And if Love's eyes are bandaged no doubt he is accused less of blindness than of infatuation. Probably they mean to indicate by this symbol that he is incapable not so much of seeing as of foreseeing.

But we cannot pretend that the heart loses all its qualities because the mind adds its grain of salt. Generous persons can organize themselves into benevolent societies. Kindness and generosity are then usually called solidarity. There are reasonable loves and it is not absolutely forbidden a lover to show himself also intelligent.

Suppose that a woman is flattered because the moment she appears, and simply because she appears, a perfectly intelligent man suddenly becomes utterly stupid. She will not be really flattered unless this stupidity passes and is only a sudden, passing homage rendered to her charm. Stupidity can be considered a proof of love only when it occurs in a man who is not ordinarily stupid, and only if he has not delayed too long to recover and make use of his intelligence.

In the same way, it is perhaps false reasoning to speak of useless heroism, or of the hero who does more than his duty. When it is a question of duty, quantitive differences, questions of more or less, do

not exist and what you call "doing more than your duty" will never be anything except doing your duty, neither more nor less and quite simply. As for the heroism they pretend is useless, it is never useless to be heroic since heroism carries in itself its own justification, which is to serve as an example irrespective of all contingencies.

Does this mean that if you know your heroism serves no purpose, if you are perfectly clear about it, if in the hour of danger you keep entirely cool and capable of judging the probably vain results of your heroic act, yet go through with it just the same—does this mean that your perfectly conscious and reflecting courage will not be superior to an unreflecting, instinctive courage?

In other words, here where the mind has stayed in control, will it not add its own merit to the merit of the heart?

Yes, but consider that the mind will simply have said, "My heart urges me to commit an idiotic act, I know quite well that it is idiotic but I shall do it just the same."

In the matter of courage the mind never can and never should fail to follow the leadership of the heart. If mind, reason and reflection take the upper hand and you always weigh pros and cons—whether it is or is not worth while to jump into the water with your clothes on or if you should at least make sure of your bunch of keys and your

brief case—the unfortunate person who is calling for help will have time to be drowned ten times over.

We must point out again that in matters of the heart the mind, if it is present, should not be consulted at all. At need, it should even be occupied with something else than the matter in hand so as to leave the heart undisturbed, though always letting it know that it is there.

We ask it to do nothing except to intimate its presence, and that is exactly what is called presence of mind.

An example of presence of mind was given me during the war by a captain to whom I brought an order from headquarters asking him to "himself solve immediately, before nightfall, the matter of the machine-gun." It was a gun placed in front of the little post at Hartsmanwillerkopf, which we were occupying at the time, and the question was whether or not we should maintain this deadly emplacement by strengthening the shelter at night with sacks of earth, granted that the earth-squad could get out there and that the shelter would be able to hold out until nightfall.

In order to "solve the matter of the machine-gun" the captain had to go out there himself immediately, and it was while getting ready for this mission, from which he ran a good risk of never returning, that he remarked to me, after reading

over again the order, "Why solve when we have the word *decide?*"

His preoccupation with a choice of words at such a moment seems to me a perfect example of presence of mind, of the mind which exercises its control not over the execution of a perhaps useless and certainly dangerous order, but over the fashion in which it had been drawn up by the colonel, who had been careless of good writing or in a hurry.

Did not the intellectual mechanism continue to function here independently of circumstances just as, no matter where we go or what we do, our watch continues to tick in our pocket?

We have presence of mind just as we have a watch and those who make a display of it are as ridiculous as the negro of the Porte Saint-Denis with his clock in the middle of his stomach.

You will notice that there is no presence of heart that corresponds to this presence of mind. If you take the different qualities of the mind, clear-sightedness, judgment, shrewdness, you will see that it makes no difference whatever whether the heart is there or not.

The well from which the mind draws its powers is observation, but it is a well in which the heart drowns.

It is true that if the heart meddles it risks making us lose our powers of observation. Do we ob-

serve carefully those we love? If you declare that you are always able and ready to judge those you love, then you do not love them.

Do not confuse judgment with intuition. When you feel yourself drawn to or repelled by this or that person and no reason or train of reasoning seems at first sight to justify either this repulsion or attraction, then your heart is acting, and the heart not the mind is intuitive.

The heart in this case behaves like a magnet. Nothing shows it in advance how to exercise its magnetic force upon the piece of steel that it will repel or attract. It has never analyzed the elements of this force, it does not seek to explain them to itself. The bar withdraws or clings to it. That is all.

Sympathetic or unsympathetic intuition is just the same thing.

And as with magnets the same poles repel while opposite poles attract each other, so you see sympathies and antipathies spring up that seem to defy logic and reason.

Birds of a feather flock together? Never in the world! Tell me what company you keep and I will tell you what you are? Yes, on condition that I may tell you that nine times out of ten you are the opposite of those with whom you associate.

These contradictory preferences, such as the taste of dark men for fair women and of small women

for tall men are not confined to the physical plane. What a lot of dull souls surround a witty man! And why, in the house of a good, respectable fellow does one meet so many knaves among his habitual companions?

You admire the integrity of this minister, but what a set he has about him! You believe it is because of an error of judgment on his part or of a sort of sadism? They are due to the detestable effects, the mysterious and tyrannical qualities of the magnet.

Reason, logic, all the qualities of the mind, have nothing to do with it and are of no avail. You might as well command that henceforth equal and not opposite poles should attract each other, because it seemed more reasonable. It would indeed seem more reasonable and logical, but your command would be absurd and absurdly useless, as you well know.

In the same way, one can have no intuition as to the exact result of a problem of arithmetic. You do not correct a bill or add it up again by the heart.

If the heart pretends to have been present at the deliberations of the mind, if it has neither impeded nor falsified these deliberations, then its presence has only been a parody or pretence.

Do you remember a celebrated case a few years ago in which a society woman was accused of having murdered her husband or of having been

at the very least an accomplice of the murderers?

A pair of gloves had played the most important part in the evidence. During an entire session witnesses, lawyers, magistrates and the accused had disputed over this pair of gloves.

Then when all was over and a verdict of acquittal had consecrated the eloquence of the defense and the uncertainty of the jury, the accused, who until then had given evidence of singular clear-headedness, seemed to give way to her feelings. She could hardly stammer out her thanks and she left the prisoner's box, her face hidden in her handkerchief, her shoulders shaken with sobs, her eyes obstinately fixed on the ground.

Because her eyes were on the ground she noticed a glove that someone in the audience had dropped and which had lain there until she passed. Then, still overcome and sobbing, the accused had given it a sharp kick with her toe and had murmured through her teeth, "That's for the prosecutor!"

I am quite ready to believe that there is some constant formed by the united qualities of heart and mind. In the end, the mind is always developed at the expense of the heart. That is why we should not always try to explain and understand everything.

What is the use of understanding unless it brings love?

If our heart is not rich enough to love everything let us not attempt to enrich our mind to the

point of understanding everything. Beware lest the new riches of your mind impoverish your heart!

Happiness undoubtedly lies in loving a few things very deeply rather than in loving many things a little, because you need not flatter yourself that you can love a great many things a great deal.

The attainments of the mind are like the oil that is poured on the water of a night lamp; at a hasty gesture or if the proportions are wrong the equilibrium of the two liquids is broken and the lamp goes out.

Everything goes back to this question of equilibrium. To have the heart upright and the mind well-balanced one must be able to maintain a proper balance between the qualities of the mind and the heart.

Were you aware that the difficulty of his tricks is increased for a juggler with the difference in weight and volume of the objects he alternately throws into the air and catches again in his hand?

We juggle with the qualities of our heart and our mind, with a dagger and a paper fan. It is almost child's play if the fan weighs as much as the dagger.

Or again, we are like the juggler who balances a peacock feather on the end of his nose. Our nose does not extend as far as the length of the feather, nor would the feather be more easily balanced if it did.

XI. WHAT LOVE IS

As to what love is, I cannot think of it without remembering a little scene that Footit, the famous clown, once composed on the subject. In a revue at the Folies-Bergère . . . the Folies-Bergère and Footit, what strange companions for love! but wait! . . . Footit, on being questioned by his partner as to the different fashionable sports, imitated them one after another by way of reply. Tennis? He threw and caught imaginary balls in the most graceful manner possible. The automobile? You would have thought him seated at the wheel. Boxing? His supposed adversary would have had hard work to escape the quick, fast hail of his threatening blows.

"And then, Footit, there is love," added his partner after a time in a serious voice and shaking her head.

But at the single word, love, you saw the clown, suddenly motionless, fall straight backwards upon the ground as if he had been struck dead.

Love? I see again the big square at Douai on an autumn evening and alone, in the middle of the square, in the cold mist and gathering dusk, some

wandering musicians, one of whom scrapes a fiddle while the other sings:

"Love of woman has only one season
It passes like the spring. . . ."

Love as passion! Love as romance! We deal with love as we do with death, deck it out with a capital letter and are unable to free it from a whole literature that merely falsifies our ideas, makes a travesty of our sentiments and complicates everything.

Love is much simpler; when it is approached rightly nothing is more simple. But this is true on condition that it is accepted for what it is, for a natural development and enrichment of our personality, and not as a cataclysm that overwhelms it, as something exceptional and almost monstrous.

Let us begin by assuming that lovers are not exceptional beings, having exceptional sentiments, able to do exceptional things and endowed with exceptional rights. Let us begin by granting that a lover exists in every human being, that when he is born every human being receives the portion of love he is to experience and inspire. Only one must not mistake one's possibilities of love or go beyond them. Love is a means and not an end, one of the means that has been given us to attain happiness, indeed a form of happiness itself. And love cor-

responds so closely to the nature of happiness that it, too, is a choice and it, too, consists first of all in knowing how to choose. And let me say also that one chooses only once, in spite of appearances and a lot of mythical and romantic nonsense. For we no more have a succession of loves than we have a succession of happinesses; but suddenly we experience plenitude, which is love and which is also happiness.

One does not attain to love through a series of imperfect attempts, since love could not exist out of its perfection, just as light to lighten us must absorb all the shadow. It would be in vain for you to pierce a wall with a myriad of little holes, like those of a watering can, and which taken all together would equal the space of an ordinary window. Would the light that filtered through these myriads of tiny holes be equal or comparable to that given by an open window? Could you read your book in a room lighted by these myriads of little holes as you could by a window?

But what, you ask, would be the use of opening the window if it were not light outside or if the window opened upon nothing? That perfect, complete, total love which you are asked to spend all at once, all the love that has fallen to your lot, all the love of which you are capable, suppose you have merely flung it out of the window? Suppose

the person for whom you had destined it will have none of it?

Love is a choice, but a mutual choice, one in which, without entirely renouncing your free will, your free choice will depend or at least will have to take into account another free will, that of the beloved object.

But truly there is no love unless it is shared. Love is the result of two wills and not the effort of one. If you think you love someone who does not love you, what you experience may be desire, ambition, ardor or an attempt at seduction but it is not love since there is no accord in the first place, and if the accord does not exist at the start you will attain later only to approximations.

When blue and yellow mix they do not "consent" to make green. A certain ensemble of physical, intellectual and moral elements which meet in a certain man and woman ought to form love and do not need to "consent" to do so. These elements have only to be perceived. But since this does not always happen there is such a thing as unrealized or missed love, but there is no love that has been constrained or has merely consented.

You sometimes pass close to love, but if its path was not marked out in advance you will never force it to come to you.

Love itself is not in us but rather the possibility of love, as a potential green exists in yellow and

blue, only on condition that you mingle them. And no doubt you are familiar with those pin-wheels that we give children which, as they turn, display one whirling circle of colored cardboard after another. The movement of the pin-wheels makes the colors blend and creates unexpected and continually changing color schemes that amaze the child. But let the windmill stop turning and there is nothing left but motionless pieces of cardboard—gold, red, white or black.

Its changing spectacles are the marvel of love. Magic and illusion transform faces and souls like these pieces of paper, until you no longer know them or would dream of knowing them. But this transformation will last only so long as the pin-wheel turns, so one should not stop loving.

Is it possible to keep on loving forever? And why not? The characteristic of love lies in its enduring quality, just as the quality of a perfume lies in its persistence. A single love ought to perfume a whole life just as a rose preserves its sweet odor even when it is dried and withered. And a rose always gives perfume. Happiness without love is like a flower without perfume, but such flowers do exist and often are magnificent and richly colored. Thus love is not indispensable to happiness and one can imagine happy people who never have been and never will be lovers. . . . They are sim-

ply flowers, beautiful flowers that have no fragrance. No artificial perfume could replace the fragrance that ought to come from themselves.

Love ought to unfold as naturally as a flower exhales its perfume. Love is a natural condition, it is not the result of a crisis, a fever, a paroxysm. And that is why we maintain that this love, the only one that deserves to be called love, is not limited in its duration, limited to the time of the crisis, to the culminating point of the paroxysm, nor does it fail the moment the fever fails.

The lake may have its currents and its quick water, they are not what characterize it. You do not think of them when you think of the calm mirror of the lake. The true face of love is like the calm mirror of the lake; do not seek there for the currents of desire and the rapids of passion.

One is only too apt to confuse desire and love, and to attribute to love those ideas of pursuit and struggle which belong only to desire. The one who desires, in the presence of the one desired, is like the hunter in the presence of the game. It is desire that makes two adversaries out of these two opposed beings, while love is all understanding and peace. And if desire has put you on the track of love, then desire ceases with the chase and love returns alone, bringing the game-bag full.

One does not desire what one possesses, and love is possession. Say, if you wish, that possession kills

desire, but do not say that it kills love since, quite the contrary, it is identified with it.

Love is made of confidence because it only exists in certitude. It is desire that is excited and uneasy, like the hunter whose frenzy, jealous pride and boastfulness it shares. Two lovers who constantly ask each other, "Do you love me?" utter at the same time an unnecessary question and its answer. If they no longer loved each other they would not trouble to ask: rather, they ask, "Do you love me?" as a man who has won a lottery counts over and over the bank notes given him. The money is there, in his purse or drawer. He knows it is there, but he wishes to see it, he is never tired of handling it. The miser does the same, unlike the gambler who plays for the sake of the game without being much concerned over the money itself or as to whether he wins or loses it.

Desire is to love as the gambler is to the miser. But the miser is an egoist. Well, love is egoism shared by two. A gambler may make a fortune and a miser may ruin himself: does that mean that the gambler has become a miser or the miser a gambler? Whoever burns continually with desire is not a lover.

Nor is he a lover who is considered, because he is the first to say so himself, a great seducer, one who is always after all the women. Certainly women are grateful to those who pay them atten-

tion, and it is quite possible that he charms them all. But it is not possible to charm all women and be loved by one alone and you must charm one single woman in order to be loved. All the seductions you may place in one half of the scale weigh nothing compared to love that occupies the other half.

And what I say concerning the seductions of a man I say also concerning the coquetry of a woman. A seducer and a coquette, who seem to make a profession of loving and being loved, will never know love and will never be two lovers.

There are no professional lovers any more than there are fated, predestined lovers, since love is a coming together, since there is no love unless there is response, and since its very essence lies in this response.

It is natural that chance should play its part in love as in happiness, since love is one of the aspects of happiness.

When Petrarch met Laura, chance had determined that this young Italian from Arezzo should come to Avignon. He might just as well have gone to Montpellier or Charpentras and never have met Laura.

There is never but a single Petrarch for a single Laura, but neither without the other would have lost all his possibilities of love. Love is a unit as

unity is 1, but if one cannot attain 1 there are .0999999 . . . otherwise this problem of love could not be solved, or its solution would be as difficult as finding a golden needle in a field of wheat.

Since not all lovers are permitted to go to Corinth—or to Avignon, like Petrarch—love would perhaps be wise to halt by the way and, rather than wander the streets of Avignon or the shores of the Gulf of Corinth seeking a perfect love, to accept a chance love that perhaps was not perfect but might easily be made so on condition that one clung to it and, most important of all, held it fast.

If we are to believe certain statisticians—why should it matter which ones?—there are 1,391,032,000 inhabitants on the surface of the globe. They do not specify the number of women among them, but supposing that they equal the number of men, which is quite unlikely, then these 695,515,999 men should meet these 695,516,000 women and each should recognize from among them the one who is precisely and essentially destined for himself.

This brings to mind a figure in the cotillion in which the men, who outnumber the women, are drawn up on one side and the women on the other. At a signal from the leader, the men rush forward to claim a partner, for the important thing is not to be one of those left over.

This is also the point of puss-in-the-corner; be-

fore leaving your place you must always make sure of another. This too is the game of the 695,515,999 corners. Try not to be the one left over.

In this race after love or, more exactly, after what one believes to be love, beauty is one of the points of direction, in fact the primary point because one distinguishes it at once and most easily.

There is a connection between beauty and love just as there is between money and happiness. Just as money does not make happiness but contributes to it, so beauty does not make love but certainly contributes to love.

There is also this analogy between money and beauty, that neither one nor the other possesses an absolute value but the value of each is modified according to periods, circumstances and climates. A man who is considered rich in his village might have great difficulty in holding the same rank in a city, and there are also village and city beauties. "One must have everything needful," say the worthies. Yes, but what is needful? Beauty like wealth exists by comparison and it is typical of anyone in love that he never thinks of comparing.

And because they do not make comparisons, the beauty of lovers, like their love itself, appears invulnerable to the attacks of age. Stretched out on the bottom of your boat as it drifts on the water, you would never notice that the current was carrying you along if you did not see the trees and houses

on the bank as they slid past you. It would seem as if you and your boat stayed always in the same place. The passage of the years is no more apparent in a beloved face than the succession and changes in the landscape from the bottom of a boat. Because you need have no other mirror than this face.

Philemon by the side of Baucis does not notice that either he or she has grown old. If there is no more melancholy and ridiculous spectacle than an old man in love, it is because he fell in love when he was old. Observe that, on the contrary, there is no more noble and touching spectacle than the loves of Philemon and Baucis, who quite simply, without a thought of their age which they do not need to consider, continue to love one another.

They are accustomed to represent love with his eyes bandaged. He should be shown, rather, wearing "blinkers." For though we say love is blind, it is not blindness to refuse to look at anyone but the beloved object.

For that matter, what is this love that you pretend is not only blind but jealous and fickle, bold and mad, which you accuse of causing a thousand torments and sometimes even crime?

Such love may be called passion or amorous desire, but it should not be called love. It is not love or at least not that perfect accord of two beings which, I have striven to show, should alone be

called by the beautiful name of love, an accord that ceases of itself the moment either of the two seeks to introduce a foreign element which is as unendurable as a false note and which alone suffices to destroy all the harmony.

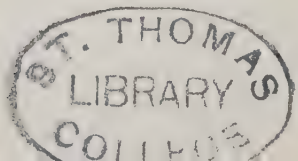
Love is a contest like a game of solitaire, in which if you cheat you betray yourself.

How can you be fickle if you are in love, since though you may abandon the object of your love for a new object you cannot expect that love can be picked up and put down this way at will, that you can send it away and then call it home again?

And how, if you are in love, can you be jealous, since if you doubt your love you instantly suppress it?

It is desire that is fickle, desire that can give way to another desire and be renewed by a change of object, but love can neither be renewed nor replaced. If you are jealous it is really your pride that is suffering, your desire constantly to affirm your mastery; or else your jealousy is without motive and you destroy, betray, and ruin your love; or else you have a motive for being jealous, in which event love itself has already disappeared.

Love when it appears does not need to be either bold or timid. It appears, and that suffices. And no bold move will make it appear any more than timidity will impede it. Bold love presupposes con-



quests by love, but love has never conquered anyone who was not destined and determined to be caught.

Do you still speak of the madness of love? What folly! On the contrary, there can be no love, and I mean real love, not exaggerated and frantic passion, except between persons who are entirely reasonable and balanced. Love, and I shall never grow weary of saying so, is the simplest, the most normal, the most natural thing in the world. Then why should you wish it to serve as an explanation or an excuse for abnormal acts, why should you say that love makes one mad when it is the characteristic of healthy and wise people?

I can endure even less to hear about martyrs for love or criminals because of love.

One suffers from unsatisfied desire, but one cannot suffer from an unsatisfied love, since love brings with it its own satisfaction and is a part of our happiness, so that to suffer from love is as absurd as to suffer from happiness.

It is unsatisfied desire that arms the criminal, or jealousy, which, as I have said, is incompatible with love.

In all this there is not a trace of love, rather its parody, its imitation, its caricature. This is a soil in which love does not flourish, any more than one could grow edelweiss on the Riviera or acacias at Chamonix . . . or if they are grown in these places

it is only in forcing beds and hothouses, and have not hothouse plants always something artificial and almost monstrous about them?

Here we recognize what I have already pointed out as the offense of literature. For literature has need of monsters or at least cannot be satisfied with simple things, and as I said before, nothing is more simple than love.

But this simplicity does not do at all for literature.

Love? A gentleman loves a lady—he loves, she loves, they both love—that is all there is to love and that is the end of it. But if this were the end of it, simply immediately, right away, without any other complications, what would become of the novel and the play? And since they wish at all costs to write novels and plays about love, since the public wishes or is persuaded to believe that it likes nothing else (perhaps because authors neither wish nor know how to write about anything else) all plays and novels do indeed begin with a gentleman who loves a lady. But the matter must be complicated: he loves, she no longer loves, another loves her, he loves another—and we have all the troubles, impediments, caresses, wrongs, torments, violences, vengeances and crimes of love! . . .

And the worst of it is, that these two false lovers are presented as heroic lovers, so that many worthy souls who love one another truly, that is without

these wild imaginings and ridiculous trickery, are vaguely uneasy and begin to wonder in the depths of their hearts, "I love my wife without feeling the need of making such a fuss about it and I am sure my wife loves me too, though she doesn't behave like that to me. But what if these things they do and say in their books and plays were really love after all, the very mark of love? Suppose you couldn't really know how to love or prove that you did without all that?"

Set your mind at rest, worthy souls. Those characters are more given to words than to actions and love has nothing to do with their pretended exploits, their delirious ravings and extravagances. There are not two ways of loving any more than there are two ways of breathing—panting is not breathing—and one ought to love as one breathes, when one is well and has neither pain nor fever. If Petrarch and Laura really loved, you may be sure they loved as you do—and he wrote the famous sonnets into the bargain.

The mistake, the confusion springs from our passion for believing that love is the motive for everying, from our wish to refer everything back to it and explain everything by it. The moment a man and a woman are together we refuse to consider them otherwise than as lovers, behaving like lovers. We never rest until we have dragged love upon the scene.

It is true that for the past few years, and especially since the war, they are fond of asserting that, far from influencing us, love is no longer in the picture, and everywhere they proclaim the bankruptcy of love. That is, instead of explaining everything by love they now explain everything by its absence, but absent or present it is always the same obsession.

Love, they say, is our master, it directs our life, it commands all our actions. Let us banish love and we shall recover our liberty, the free disposition and direction of ourselves and of our ways of acting and living.

Not at all. Though love can form part of our acts it does not command them.

Love inspires great actions? Do not believe it; it inspires neither small nor great ones. We act from egoism, interest or ambition; therefore we never act from love. Egotistical desire does exist as well as ambitious and interested passions, and here again we mistake for love what is only passion or desire. That rider who leaps to the wide saddle of the horse as it gallops around the sawdust ring, do you suppose that she is guiding her horse? She is as charming as love, she is love, but the horse leads her. And who directs the horse? The riding master who cracks his whip in the middle of the ring!

We are the horse that gallops around the ring, to

the cracking of the whip of desire or ambition, and we ask the rider only to be light and gracious—but we should not yield to an illusion that does not deceive us nor try to persuade ourselves that it is she, the light and gracious rider, that it is love that makes us turn to the right or the left, makes us stop or start again at its will.

If love were master, so truly master that we behaved according to its will, it is clear that we should never act, or to be more exact, we should never accomplish anything. For to love, love alone is the great consideration. A woman who loves glory, either her own or that of the man she loves, does not love love and does not love her lover. "It is for you that I am ambitious," says a lover. Lying words! When ambition intervenes then love no longer suffices. And love which does not suffice for itself and for those who invoke it is not and never has been love. "Love in a cottage," this old, unfashionable formula, somewhat ridiculous as it is, yet corresponds most exactly to the real character, to the reality, of love.

Not that love cannot lodge in a palace. "Love in a palace" would be quite as true as the other, on condition that love sufficed in the palace as it did in the cottage, and that one had no wish to seek anything else or to go elsewhere.

But love is not a matter either of riches or poverty.

They pretended that feminism was an attack upon love, that women were trying to organize their lives independently of men and consequently independently of love.

This is the same mistake that we make when we consider love as the aim of life, whereas it is only the accompaniment. The road we are following was laid out without the engineer troubling himself to learn whether or not violets and daisies would cover the lower slopes and if there would be sweetbrier and hawthorn in the hedges on either side. We follow the road because it goes where we wish to go and not for the sake of the hawthorn and sweetbrier, the violets and daisies, though we may be delighted with the sight of them as we go along, may smell their fragrance and pick a bunch of them.

One does not build a house out of roses and honeysuckle, but the roses and honeysuckle that decorate it are the grace and gaiety of our house.

Only first we must build our house and choose our road.

Feminism has nothing to do either for or against love, since it is concerned with the social order and moves on a plane that is the exact opposite of the sentimental plane. When woman draws up the specification of her claims and rights, how will she demand the right to love, which is a natural right, like that of breathing?

That is what one forgets too often, the natural

quality of love. And how, if we consider it apart, we falsify its true countenance and destroy its harmony by giving it this monstrous and extravagant aspect!

I have said that we love as we breathe; are we forever considering and boasting of the quality of the air we breathe? We pay attention only to the breathing of those who are ill and oxygen is given only to them.

With love, on the contrary, we behave as if nothing else counted and we give the impression of thinking only of it. To be sure it counts and to be sure we must think of it, but we have no need to remark or point out constantly that we are thinking of it. I am not complaining that we give love too important a position, but only one that is unsuited to it. Let us love one another, but without ostentation or fine speaking—I love you, you love me. That is good. Let us say no more about it, and in any case it interests only ourselves and does not concern others!

XII. THE WEDDING MARCH

If love is a simple matter, an even more simple matter is to marry the one we love.

But it is important not to falsify the idea of marriage any more than that of love. And there is one thing more dangerous about marriage than about love, which is that people often pretend to be in love and even believe in good faith that they are, when they are not at all and do not know nor ever will what real love is; while marriage is a question not of appreciation but of condition. How many people there are who have married under a false idea of marriage, yet who are married hard and fast and continue to spread this false idea through their example as married people!

We have devised categories of marriage, prudent marriages, marriages for money. Actually there is only one reason proper for marriage and that is love, if you are convinced, as I have tried to convince you myself, that one loves as one marries—as one ought to marry—but once.

The antagonism which they say exists between love and marriage rests precisely upon the liberty that some claim for love and which it seems to be

the official mission of marriage to oppress and suppress. But who, when he really loves, dreams of demanding a liberty for which he lost all desire the moment he fell in love and of which he has now only a confused notion? Liberty for what? Liberty to love no longer or to turn our affection towards another object? But in both cases love is no longer in question, since in both cases love is either dead or has lost the quality of love.

Let love beware, they say: marriage is a cage, marriage is a prison! But love has not, whatever we may think, either the brain of a bird or the soul of a burglar. And there is neither cage nor prison for one who never thinks of flying off or of escaping.

They also say that to try to identify love and marriage is like trying to square the circle, but without flattering ourselves that we shall be able to do this, we can always inscribe a square in a circle or a circle in a square.

Marriage is not a prison, but neither is it a house of retreat, and because one has established one's love in marriage is no reason why one should give it no further thought. Marriage does not alter love; the love of married persons demands the same pains, the same attentions, the same watchful care of one's person as if they were not mar-

ried and hoped to become so. Marriage is no more an end than love, but is a means like love and with love for assuring our happiness. And all happiness must be won over again day by day.

The expression "conjugal happiness" does not mean that happiness is assured once for all because the epithet "conjugal" can be added to it.

The marriage certificate is not a diploma that, once you have got it, entitles you to fold your arms, your career assured. Fiancés should not imitate those students who prepare eagerly for a difficult examination—who, for example, make a terrific effort to enter the Polytechnic School, and then are so satisfied with their success that they never again in their lives do anything whatever. Are they not former students of the Polytechnic School?

The title of "former fiancé" is not enough for the happiness of a household and marriage ought to be not merely the realization of an engagement but its prolongation.

But at the time of their engagement, the fiancés try to show only their best side, whereas unfortunately as soon as their engagement is ended by marriage the fiancés of yesterday, instead of continuing their effort, start in lightheartedly to display all their disagreeable qualities. It is not merely that marriage is necessarily a slight "come down" from an engagement—the "come down"

from theory to practice—but that illusion plays an excessive part in an engagement; marriage, we know, hastens to bring everything back to the limits of reality. Of course we cannot go through life in seven-league boots or on magic skates, or in Cinderella's little slippers, but no more are we obliged to put on at once and wear all day long those ugly and vulgar slippers which, I admit, justify their name of "cozies."

The great enemy of marriage is monotony, boredom, what is called the humdrum of marriage in opposition to conjugal happiness. The humdrum of marriage is precisely what you bring into it when you always wear your slippers.

On the contrary, whoever is constantly striving, always alert and vigilant, never thinks of being bored or finds time heavy on his hands. Instead of that, under the pretext that the house will be always there, today as well as tomorrow and the day after, you sleep soundly in the house of your marriage, which is also the house of your happiness. You fall asleep without bothering to see if there is a fissure in the ceiling or a crack in the walls. Ah, the first fissure, the first crack! It is nothing to repair them, but you must not fall asleep.

Marriage is also a vase which is not, like the poet's vase, cracked by the tap of a fan, yet if you are not careful some day not a drop will remain

of the precious liquid or of the perfume it once contained. There are vases, without an apparent crack or chink, from which liquid oozes and the perfume evaporates unless you are careful. Yes, you must be constantly on guard.

This enemy of marriage, which you denounce and call boredom, is first of all your own laziness and weakness, your small meannesses, your failures which day by day by day grow more serious and make you more cynical. . . . You say that's quite all right? that things do very well as they are? . . . But no, that doesn't do at all or it will do no longer, and you will end by going elsewhere.

Going elsewhere: that did not succeed in the case of the pigeon of the fable, but then this pigeon only returned home because he was worn out and footsore, and not because he came to realize that his home was more beautiful than the most beautiful things he had seen on his travels.

And yet you should make sure of this point first of all, profiting by the experience of those tourists who have visited Holland and Spain, Switzerland and Italy, and who confess to you that they could have found places in France just as marvelous as those they went so far to seek. Marriage is our France.

Do not say mockingly that you know these tourists, that they are touched and delighted with

the landscapes on postcards, at a waterfall, a windmill, a little old church with its pointed belfry and mossy stone benches under its porch. Do not laugh either at the windmill or the waterfall, but stop in this fresh retreat, enter the little church to refresh your soul and body, sit down on the stone bench to rest.

Perhaps you are corrupted with bad literature, for the same detestable literature that taught you that love exists only in complication and disorder now wishes to convince you that when a husband loves his wife and a wife her husband there is no material for romance, and your pride desires a romance.

When a train skirts a field in which a peaceful horse is enjoying the air and getting rid of flies in the shade of an apple tree, the horse at once dashes off at an aimless gallop to stop short the moment the last carriage has disappeared. Was he frightened? Not at all, but he wished to show the train and its passengers—and perhaps there were other horses in one of the freight cars?—that he was a free horse and could gallop at will where he had been put out to pasture. Yes, he had wanted to show them, and now, whisking his tail among the angry flies, what has he got out of it?

It seems as if you, too, tried to imitate this absurd quadruped with its stupidly vain and perfectly useless gallop.

I remember that on certain festive days in the regiment the company bugler thought himself obliged at reveille to embellish the regimental call with grace notes. This was called "sounding the reveille fancifully" and the bugler who sounded it knew quite well that the practiced ear of the adjutant of the week would not fail to note whatever there was contrary to regulations in the fantasy and that the door of the guard house would open that very evening before the inspired apostle of fancy. But for nothing in the world would he have given up his apostolate, though it invariably ended in four days of martyrdom, or at least of the guard house.

Long before my time in the regiment, in fact during my earliest years, fantasy had appeared to me under a form no less tyrannical but more mysterious. At my grandmother's house were some dessert plates on which various amusing scenes illustrated a series of "Parisian fantasies." I have forgotten all about most of these Parisian fantasies, but one still comes vividly before my eyes, for I thought it the most amusing and with a little teasing I always obtained it through the indulgence of my grandmother. You saw a large gentleman under a tree in the company of a rather mature lady and many children who all carried provisions for lunching on the grass. The large gentleman was bending under the weight of

a melon, a basketful of bottles, and a six-pound loaf of bread, and the legend showed him as addressing the rather mature lady—who was his wife and whom he called "My pet"—and saying, "Look, my pet, there is a very pretty little spot. . . ." But to himself he added, "And to think Sidonie is expecting me at twelve thirty-five!"

Ah, this aside, this Sidonie! My grandmother's indulgence consented to give me the Sidonie plate, but not to explain who Sidonie was or why she expected the large gentleman at twelve thirty-five when he was about to have lunch out-of-doors. "And Sidonie is expecting me at twelve thirty-five! . . ."

As a small boy I wondered a good deal about this magical phrase, this singular manifestation of "Parisian fantasies," and even today I cannot pronounce the word "fantasy" without evoking Sidonie and seeing again the stovepipe hat—for he wore such a hat—and under this hat the perspiring, uneasy, and irritated face of the large gentleman.

And to complete my ideas about fancy, did I not learn later that "fancy rum" is a rum that is not guaranteed to be rum? And that gooseberry syrup, if it admits it is "fancy," probably contains a minimum of gooseberries? And that what characterizes "fancy" bread is that it never weighs a pound?

The divine lies of fancy . . . as they sing in Lakmé.

Yet it is this fancy (this spurious, deceitful fancy, without necessity or usefulness) which you miss in marriage, which you complain marriage lacks, and of which you say it deprives you. You want Sidonie, you demand Sidonie, for Sidonie you are willing to make a mess of what would be certain happiness, Sidonie who expects you at twelve thirty-five.

Oh, yes, she expects you at twelve thirty-five, and isn't there something terribly precise about this irregularity itself?

It is to escape from the regularity of marriage that you aspire to a little fancy, this fancy which ought to bring you something different from an existence that is too well regulated and ruled over like a sheet of music paper! The sheet of music paper is certainly well ruled, but the most varied melodies are inscribed on its strictly parallel lines, and the runs and trills possible between them would tax all the inventive power of the boldest and most fertile composer.

Sometimes we see foreigners come to a neighboring table at a restaurant, take their places brusquely, and astonish us with their fashion of ordering a menu, which completely upsets all our old customs. They surprise us with their way of

beginning the meal, say with the apricot preserve, while they reserve the crayfish soup for the end.

But they are foreigners.

Besides, they do this to astonish us, and there is nothing to show that at the end of such follies they will not have a bad stomach-ache and be quite sick. We are not impressed by these innovators, and limit our originality and our independence to deciding whether we prefer the cheese before or after the side-dish.

Marriage is not a mere question of cooking, but one can talk of cooking in connection with marriage, and it is quite true that jocular and malicious wits, who think they are being very jocular and very witty, give us to understand that conjugal happiness consists entirely of bread and butter.

Bread and butter on the table, and above it the hanging light of the dining room; that is marriage, they say! But why should you consider it such a contemptible spectacle? Bread and butter have their merits, they are honest, substantial, and certain nourishment; and the hanging light is not such a bad illumination, just as it is still, no doubt, the most practical.

In the evening, before the shutters are closed and the shades drawn, when we see the hanging lamps shine out through the windows, it is as if a great peace fell over the village, bringing an impression of

well-being and calm; and that is indeed family life, the home, the torches of hymen. The hanging lamp in the dining room is the home, the hanging lamp is the torch of hymen. Through it the light is wisely and harmoniously shed, gently distributed: kindness, wisdom, harmony, all that is the hanging light in the dining room.

You prefer your solitary lamp? But suppose it smokes or glares? And your eyes may hurt, and it may go out all at once. Surely it is always better to have two to light the lamp again.

There are, of course, impenitent and hardened celibates. Rather than be illuminated by the hanging lamp in the dining room (it is true that it sometimes falls in the middle of the table), they say they would prefer not to see at all.

Hardened celibates are hardened only in pride and in timidity. It is pride that condemns in advance something of which it knows nothing, it is timidity not to dare to put it to the proof oneself.

Generalities about marriage tell you nothing about what your own particular marriage would be like. You can learn nothing here from analogy. Marriages may resemble each other, but are never similar, and two unions are never alike in all their points, in spite of a whole ensemble of similarities, just as your thumb—as anthropometry reveals—is covered with little lines that are never exactly duplicated in another thumb. Insignificant differ-

ences! But it is just these insignificant details, these infinitesimal divergences, small matters, very small things indeed, that risk spoiling a marriage or that prevent it, as someone said, from being delightful.

We do not know ourselves very well, and we know still less the one we marry. That is why we should not be timid. We must have confidence, and first of all confidence in ourselves, but we must not be proud and think that what is good for others is not good for us.

In any case, decide once for all on marriage and marry, but do not let yourself be married. A marvelous magician holding a glass in one hand and a carafe of plain water in the other can call on the spectators in a hall and ask them what they would like to drink. Port wine? Fine brandy? Syrup of grenadine? Coffee? And with the carafe of water he fills the glass and holds out to them coffee or grenadine, fine brandy or port, as they desire.

Just as the magician's carafe contains all the drinks, so the person who is proposed to you in marriage is endowed with every quality you prefer, at least according to the one who is determined you shall marry her. She is a home-woman and a brilliant woman of the world, she is elegant and she makes her dresses herself. She adores music and

children, good cooking and good books. She adores everything you adore and she adores you. And yet you are distrustful, just as you are with the magician. You say it isn't possible, that there must be some trickery about it. And especially you remember that after the magician's trick is over and whether it has succeeded or failed you will be married hard and fast.

Besides, these officious persons who are so anxious to bring about a marriage are not merely tempted by a simple trick of magic. In every matchmaker there is some of the daring curiosity that animates an enterprising inventor, or some bold chemist, who when he forms a mixture may be ignorant of the exact qualities and quantities of what he is combining and yet never worries about what may result, not even about the possibility of an explosion.

The prudent thing is to declare that you would not meddle with a marriage for anything in the world.

I even wonder if parents themselves are wise when they busy themselves with the marriage of their children. The son who answers his father with, "You are not the one who is getting married," is evidently wrong in his way of expressing himself but quite right at bottom, and the truth of this first disrespectful formula is even more evi-

dent in this second impertinent formula, "You don't marry your mother-in-law."

No, you don't marry your mother-in-law, but will not the woman you do marry develop with the years so that she may come to resemble exactly this mother-in-law who is her mother? How many mothers-in-law anticipate the physical image of their daughters when they in their turn will have reached the age to be mothers-in-law?

But if we do not marry our mother-in-law, neither does our mother-in-law marry us. In considering the possible evolution of a woman during her marriage, why not take into account the personal element brought in by the husband? In a similar sense, the son may justify his reserve as to the excellence of the paternal choice. "It is not you who are getting married," that is to say, what might be perfect considering your character, temperament, tastes, conception of life, and habits of mind, can only suit me, my father, in so far as I, your son, resemble you.

"I know better than you what is good for you." Perhaps, but what is good for me is not perhaps what would make me happy. There may be forced marriages but there is no happiness by constraint: one cannot love merely because it would be suitable; love cannot be determined, commanded, or arranged at the will of a third person, even if he were the best intentioned and most reasonable man

in the world, even if he were your father. And I persist in repeating that there is no happiness in a marriage without love.

It goes without saying that what I say about a husband's relations to his wife I believe to be equally true about a wife's relations to her husband. The reactions and responsibilities are the same and I only use the masculine form in my quality as a man and to simplify the discussion.

For both husband and wife, marriage wears a double aspect, social and sentimental, but society does very wrong to attempt to be overbearing and to believe or to pretend that it is the first if not the only party interested. They urge you when you marry to think of society, that is to say, of others. Did you think of others, of society, when you fell in love?

One should marry exactly as one falls in love, since one should marry only when one is in love.

This hold society has over love, under the excuse of conjugal love, appears on the very day of the wedding in the strange ostentation with which it surrounds a ceremony that ought to be all mystery and privacy. They speak of "the secret garden of love" and lo, the public is invited in great numbers and great pomp into this secret garden where they organize processions and give themselves up to dancing. Have you ever thought of the strange-

ness, to say no more, of that expression "a wedding march"? Do you imagine that love marches by as if on parade and that those who love each other feel the need of inviting the whole world to prove it?

But, you say, it is to affirm the lasting character of their love so that, when all the world has witnessed it, they should find it difficult to recant and may no longer dream of doing so.

Come, what hypocrisy! We all know that society, which decorates the entrance to marriage, at the same time points out the exit, that it has conceived of divorce so as to draw you more conveniently into marriage—just as the theaters that advertise spectacles assure you there is no danger of fire in their halls, not that there is nothing inflammable about but that in case of catastrophe or panic the room could be emptied in a jiffy. . . . This love that society prides itself upon guaranteeing us, is it durable? Yes, as durable as the foliage of certain evergreen trees, but how sad and sombre is this verdure which never knows the quiver of spring nor the miracle of new blossoming.

In this vase are some airy grasses, with stems as frail as spiderwebs. You know their name, they are quaking-grass. They grew in a field in the midst of the meadow-grass and they would have been cut down with the rest when the field was

mowed or else they would have succumbed to the first frost. A careful hand picked them, tied them in a bouquet and placed them in this vase where they need fear neither frost nor scythe and where they will stay for seasons, perhaps for years, but they are as dry now as if they were artificial. Shall conjugal love be like the grasses in the vase of marriage? They wished to separate them from the wild grasses, society placed them in shelter, they endure but they are withered. . . .

Too much zeal! Conjugal love does not need to be distinguished from love. Shall we have the torches of hymen, the hanging light in the dining room? Yes, but first the flame of two loving eyes.

When I attempt to write of an art of living I do not boast that I conform to all the rules of this art, nor do I indeed know them all. But I do know that, so far as the art of living together goes, there is only one single rule and that is to love each other.

Only love will make lighter these blocks of joy and sorrow of which life, including conjugal love, is made. Do you imagine that, once you are married, all your cares are going to disappear as if by magic? Marriage will bring you its own particular contingent of cares. It takes nothing away, it merely adds. Bah! what are sorrows and cares, or at least how they dwindle and pale, when one has

someone to share them or, better yet, to whom one can just confide them!

The one we love is the one of whom we think quite naturally when we are happy, but also the one to whom we instinctively turn when trouble or sorrow, big or little, assails us. The one we love is the one we remember when we are bored.

When a life in common is understood and practiced like this, how could it be monotonous? It is life itself.

But, you wonder, when people have been married for ten whole years, what can they still have to say to each other?

Our husband and wife have no need to say anything. They understand each other without speaking, so strongly is the fashion of their thoughts stamped upon each other, so exactly alike are their feelings before the same things and at the same instant. They will not be forever asking, "What are you thinking of?" They look at each other and that is sufficient. A wife's eyes are an open book to her husband, and the husband's to the wife.

Do not some of them even come to resemble each other physically after a while?

To go forward together, hand in hand, to climb the slope and then climb down again, to protect each other from the muddy ruts, from the dust,

from too large stones or too sharp pebbles and, when one is tired, to lean against the other—yes, that is the true wedding march, the loveliest, the most touching of all, but it is not accompanied by loud organs and its rhythm is in our hearts.

XIII. THE PASSING OF THE TORCH

They say, "She is a real mother-hen," which means that she has a lot of children and thinks only of them. So we must infer that, in the present state of our customs, if we merely said, "She is a mother," it would not mean any of these things. We have to say specifically, "She is a real mother-hen."

The expression always implies some commiseration and mockery. I assure you, however, that she never thinks of pitying herself, and that she would laugh if you were to suggest it.

Besides, she is a very young mother-hen. She is not yet twenty-six and she is expecting her sixth baby, so you will understand that she has no time to know what they say or do about her.

Every morning she goes first of all to the half-past six mass. Well, yes, that is her way. She likes it. She is pious and a communicant. Then she comes back to tend her five children, to wash and dress them and make them eat their breakfast, nor has she much of a household staff, only one young servant.

Two of the children already go to school, of

course not in the regular grades, nor even in the infant class, but to a sort of sub-infant kindergarten.

Three remain to be amused, watched, and taken out. Then there are their meals and a light lunch. And the two oldest, when they have returned from school, are as turbulent and absorbing as any of them.

Dinner at six, bed at seven! But the hardest part is to wait for six o'clock. The hardest time is between five and six, when you cannot take them out of doors during severe weather and when in all seasons towards the end of the day good behavior begins to weigh upon the best-behaved and the problem is to keep them quiet and not let them quarrel.

This mother-hen has had a bright idea. Every evening between five and six she installs the five chicks around her on the floor—there they can fall no lower—and sitting in the middle herself, she tells them stories. Not stories invented by persons you do not know about persons that have never existed, but true stories of the time when she was a little girl and of her mother, when she too was a little girl, and even stories of another little girl who was her mother-in-law.

And the deeply interested children—for she tells stories splendidly—will perhaps be badly taught concerning Jack and the Beanstalk and Cinderella

(what ignorance!) but they will be entirely familiar, to the least gesture and the smallest detail, with their parents, their grandparents, and even their great-grandparents. Here, indeed, is the true oral tradition.

And when these children go to bed, they will not dream of the ogre or of Puss in Boots, but of their "little grandmother" when she wore lovely festooned pantaloons that hung down below her skirts and who, on the day of her first communion, had her white dress ruined by a young chimney-sweep. He did not do it on purpose, quite the contrary, but had only offered to shake hands, to express his thanks for the pennies she had always given him. But black hands are not at all good for white muslin. Their little grandmother in white muslin, at her first communion, who was the grandmother of their mother!

How could they help sleeping well and having happy dreams after such pretty stories?

At seven o'clock only, when the children are tucked in bed and asleep, our young mother can begin to enjoy herself and live a little for herself and her husband.

For of course there is a husband, and what has he to do with all this, he, the father, who has no care of the children and does not bathe them, dress

them, take them out or feed them? Does he enjoy himself all day long?

He goes to his office and works, trying to earn money for all this little household, for the future as well as for the present. This is important, too, for five children, and soon six, are not raised and fed on air. Nor is that all. With six children (and perhaps they will not stop there in such a fine undertaking—the twenty-six-year-old mother-hen has declared she would like a dozen)—with six children or twelve, everything is multiplied by six or twelve, twelve hats, twelve coats, twelve pairs of shoes. . . . Indeed he has to think about it, the husband and father, who is not old, either, and who has the responsibility of feeding all these mouths, with their fine appetites, and clothing all these little growing bodies.

We shall not argue whether it is harder on the mother or the father to bring up children, lots of children. As you see, the business of being a mother, that is, a real mother, allows of no respite, but surely the business of being a father counts for something also.

I admit that there is at least one day when the poor man, precisely because he is a man, cuts a sorry figure, doesn't know what to do with himself, in short, is of small account—that is the day the child is born. He wanders about, he exclaims, he wrings his hands and knits his forehead, he in-

sists that he would give anything in the world to be able to share the sufferings of his wife or to be able to bear them alone. But everyone knows that this is impossible and that he can do nothing, so he is necessarily a little ridiculous.

I grant also that, later, there is a sort of care that only a woman, only a mother can give her children, care at which a man, even the most devoted father, is unskilled. But because he is unskilful, is he any the less tender? Is he not all the more unhappy at feeling himself unskilful? By the bedside of their sick child, the father grieves because he cannot put on poultices or can do so only very clumsily. It is the mother who puts on poultices, but with what desperate haste, with what a desire to be useful, to help, does the father dash to the drugstore and buy the flaxseed!

Parents say, "When you have children you no longer belong to yourself."

That is to say, we belong only to our children, but can we distinguish these children, who are our flesh and blood, from ourselves?

One can't have everything. One must make up one's mind to choose. I have described the day of the mother-hen who has five children (and soon six). There was no room in it for dancing or even for leisure. But what dance will ever compare to

the wild jig one dances with one's five children?

It is certainly pleasant to have a fine pearl necklace, but isn't it also attractive to have ten fresh little arms, plump and rosy, outstretched and eager to hang about your neck? "Me first, me first! . . ."

And when she appears, this young mother, with only a simple little skirt, but with her five children ranged about her, so clean, so neat, so well tended, five little children all dressed alike, I assure you that such a mother is well dressed.

No doubt our national academy of music, for instance, arranges magnificent performances; no doubt one can pass an excellent evening at the Comédie Française.

I see no chance for you, young parents, to go to the Théâter Française or to the opera. Neither this evening nor tomorrow nor any evening for a long time.

But in your own room and in the next room also are a cradle and all these little white beds, and everywhere are sleeping babies. Lean over the cradle and the little white beds, both of you, look at your sleeping children, their cheeks flushed with slumber, their soft hair matted on their moist foreheads: of all magnificent spectacles this is by far the most touching. And you may be sure there has never been such pretty music at the National Academy as this calm and gentle breathing.

One has to choose, and you have chosen.

You are ready to sacrifice for your children, and will sacrifice for them, I imagine, many other things besides evenings at the opera, a pearl necklace, and dancing. You will sacrifice for them your liberty, your peace of mind, and your health. Will they be grateful to you for these sacrifices?

Let me whisper in your ear, Do not count upon it.

They will be dear, good children and they will be very fond of you, but do not expect them to sacrifice anything whatever for you, even though you have sacrificed everything for them. And that is how it should be. They in turn will sacrifice everything for their children. You have simply shown them the way, given them the countersign. There is neither indifference nor ingratitude on their part, but their appreciation for what you have done for them is like the dark or fair hair, the blue or grey eyes you gave them at birth. That is very well as it is, but why think more about it? It is a state of affairs that has been settled once for all—they are blond, they have blue eyes and they are grateful—and they think no more of it. We should not either.

Do we have the children we deserve and are our children what we make them? Yes and no. Two little boys brought up together and after exactly the same fashion, who have received an identical training and discipline, will show an absolutely different conception of life, when they approach man's

estate, indeed from adolescence, and will approach it with sharply dissimilar attitudes of mind. Yet they have never been left to themselves or to others, nor have they been subjected to different influences. They have not left each other and they have not been left.

This glass blower of Murano dips his tube into the molten mixture and blows and the glass objects that appear on the end of it, though made of the same mixture and by the same workman, nevertheless have different iridescences and colorations, have reflections that distinguish them from one another.

With our children, we are like the glass blower of Murano with his glass, but we can always recognize the origin and that it is Venetian glassware.

In the days when the Bièvre flowed uncovered through Paris in the quarter of the dyeworks, it used to be interesting to follow its course, which resembled a liquid and moving rainbow, and to admire its blue, green, or orange water. Yet it was always the same Bièvre.

When the two little boys have become big boys they would always bear the same family stamp, no matter what they say or do. This family mark, this trademark, is our own creation, and by it we can prove that we have been good parents, just as one is a good workman.

When I speak of a family mark I do not mean merely a fact of law, and when I say that two boys

will always bear the same family stamp it is not merely because they will bear the same name. The label does not make the contents of a bottle. I have an old wine cellar in which the precious flasks wear enameled tags around their necks on a silver chain bearing the name of a liqueur which rarely corresponds to the contents of the bottle. The liqueurs are renewed and changed, and they never change the tags. . . .

The family is less the name one bears, as a bottle bears its tag, than a certain atmosphere in which one is brought up, and it depends entirely upon the manner of living of the parents whose charge it is. It is the *family spirit*—the sense of the family, and you will or will not have it according to whether your parents have or have not troubled to pass it on to you.

Even when they have not passed it on to you, you will feel yourself impregnated and pervaded by it, just as no one had to pass on to you the heat of the hearth that warmed the room. You entered the room and you were warmed. That is what a family is, a hearth, but unfortunately you must not imagine that everyone who creates a family creates a home.

The home only exists through the persistent will of the parents and through their example, the example of their union and of their love. A divided home is no real home. It is a hearth already ex-

tinct; you do not scatter the flames but the ashes. If you parents love each other and have never ceased to love each other, you have given your children an example they will never wish to forget and you have forged the strongest of chains to hold them and bring them back to you. It is in this way and only in this way that you can hope to have the children you deserve, because no matter how far they go from you or how different they become, they will think with tenderness of this memory you have given them, this example you have set them, and if they do not follow the example they will feel in spite of everything a confused pain that they have not wished or been able to follow it.

The home, the charm of the home, its penetrating and secret sweetness! . . . Even friendship itself is powerless to create a home. It is the restaurant table compared to the one at which as a child you ate your first chocolate cream. What matter if this home table had only an oilcloth cover? Before the immaculate fine damask of other tables, I venture to say that you think of the oilcloth with tenderness and regret.

But this friendship, or rather these friendships, are the enemies of the parents, or at least their rivals in the hearts and especially in the minds of their children. Do not children always sacrifice their parents to their friends, especially to their

feminine friends? We choose our friends but do not choose our parents, as a cynical, cruel but clear-sighted observer has noted down.

"But if I love my children as a father I also love them as a friend."

No doubt, and I see that you try to be your children's friend, to treat them as such and to talk to them freely and familiarly. . . .

It is wasted effort! Your friendship will never be on the same plane as that of a simple and actual friend, that is, of a stranger.

Do you recall that poet who could not refrain, when the hour came for his *apéritif,* the green hour as they used to call it, from going to the café and taking his green absinthe? Vainly you offered to let him drink the same absinthe at home, you even vainly installed at your own house, to please him, a little marble-top table, exactly like all the marble-top tables one finds in all the cafés—you even set up the traditional *pyrogène.* In spite of the *pyrogène,* in spite of the table, in spite of the bottle of absinthe, it was impossible to keep the poet in your house. He wanted the café.

So your children want friends, even though they may have found in you the kindest friendship in the world. One seeks friendship as naturally as one goes to a café, and sometimes one finds it in a café.

But how many of these pillars of the café, in the

café itself, indeed precisely because they are in a café, think most eagerly and longingly of their homes, of their own quarters, of their own room! . . .

Do not get put out about it, do not imagine that your children will forget you in the midst of their friends. They will not, on condition that you do not constantly find fault with these friends. Do not forbid them or reproach them for preferring these friends. Patience! They will come back to you. Better still, their thoughts will never have completely deserted you.

It is true that they often leave you alone, you who have so often sacrificed both your work and your pleasures to stay with them, to consecrate all your time and your affection to them. But "one can't do as one likes," and besides their friends, these great friends of theirs, they too have their own affairs; they have or will have a new family. . . .

What does it matter if you see them less often or not at all, if they are obscurely aware in their hearts of a vague remorse, a vague sadness at not seeing you as often as they should?

"Oh, yes, I know, I know. I am not considerate enough of my parents."

We try to be considerate of everyone and flatter ourselves that we are. We should blush to fail with anyone whatever, except our parents. In their

case alone we don't bother, and we are wrong. But we tell ourselves that they have infinite indulgence. We are well aware that our parents are ready to receive us just as we are, with or without our Sunday clothes. They would receive us quite naked.

And this is not even indulgence on their part. Indulgence depends on a judgment that is more or less severe; it reflects, it reasons, it restrains itself, it is more or less indulgent. The love of parents for their children is instinct, and instinct is not expressed by more or less. Parents do not love their children by more or less. Do you suppose that this love can possibly diminish towards the end as tenderheartedness is finally dulled, and do you believe that we love our children less when they are twenty years than when they were twenty months old?

Our love may assume different forms, corresponding to the different degrees of protection that the child demands from us as he grows. The protective sense is mixed with the paternal sense, and also with the filial sense, since a day may come when the child no longer needs us but we need the child. Youth as the staff of old age is a noble image, and it is a touching thing that the father should one day lean on the son after the many years when the son has needed his support. It is an indication that the family tie is also a social tie, since in marriage a social rôle is imposed on love.

But this social tie, this social rôle of protection does not regulate once and for all the relations between parents and children, any more than it does the relations between married couples. Marriage is something quite different, the family also.

The soldier on the battlefield who feels he is dying and calls for his mother is quite aware that no real help can come to him from her, no actual and immediate protection. Yet he calls his mother and no one else because he does not wish to die alone, and his mother's name, rather his mother's image evoked by that name, will fill the solitude. He knows that the thought of his mother is in some way always within his reach, constantly held out to him. Far or near a mother is always with her child, always present.

In the same way, it is in vain and so much the worse for them if our children withdraw from us and neglect us. Whether they wish it or not, the thought of them is always with us and we shall never be alone, thanks to them, any more than they will be alone, thanks to us. Their thought is bound to our thought just as their flesh is our flesh.

There is no friendship in the world, the sweetest, the most tender and confiding, the most charming, that can give you the equivalent of this.

I grant that not all parents are necessarily delightful, nor are all children, for that matter. But

they are as they are and we are forced to accept them as such, while we are always free to keep as friends only those who are delightful or whom we consider so. I grant also that certain teachers may have had an even more decisive influence over our characters and intelligence than our parents. I grant that we differ from our parents in our tastes as well as in certain fashions of judging, thinking, and feeling . . . only in appearance, after all, but the conditions and pleasures of life are ruled by these appearances.

But compared to our parents, masters and friends, the most delightful masters and friends, can only be like the lobby of a hotel or a furnished cottage by the sea compared to our own home.

How bored you would be if you had to live forever in such a villa. Have you ever thought about a solitary death in a hotel room? What a horror! The only refuge where we are not afraid to be afraid, where we feel at ease and reassured, lies for parents in the hearts of their children and for children in the hearts of their parents. There, ready for whatever may happen, we are at home.

How I pity those who have no children! This idea obsesses me and I am forever returning to it, for I consider that only children give a meaning to our life, that is, give it significance and direction. You may protest that we escape a vast amount of care, responsibility, and expense when

we have no children, in short that you are "much happier as you are." But what is this happiness of yours, or rather your carefully arranged daily pleasure, compared to the distressing future that awaits you and that you are actually preparing for yourself? No anxieties, you say? What about the thought of dying old and alone?

At the barber's the mirrors are amusingly arranged so that your image is reflected in the glass before you and again in the glass behind you, and is repeated over and over with all your gestures into further and further distances, the images growing smaller and smaller, apparently to infinity. As a contrast, you know the fantastically imagined tale of the man who, when he looked into a mirror, could not see his own image. Without children we go through life with the same terrified anguish of this man before his mirror—this man whose reflection had been carried off when the devil had bought his soul.

But before the same mirror, the husband has leaned his face toward his wife's face in an affectionate and tender pose (as if he were at the photographer's, why not?) and his wife has leaned toward her husband. "I am not alone, we are not alone," they seem to say.

Childless couples often flatter themselves that their happiness is unmixed and their love undivided since they belong only to each other and are happy

together, much happier in a magnificent, double egoism, in the splendid isolation of their love, than they could be otherwise.

This is juggling with words or trying to deceive oneself. Do you mean to pretend that the love a mother and father spend on their children ruins their mutual love when, on the contrary, it cannot help increasing or at the very least strengthening it? When you spend in this way you are like a miser who changes his hoarded treasure into stocks, bonds, and title deeds . . . though he may feel as if he were throwing his money out of the window, dissipating his fortune and squandering everything. You are making an investment in being the father of a family.

I repeat that your reasoning is false, that all false reasoning is dangerous, and that on the whole you will once more have been duped by your egoism. On the whole, or more exactly, at the beginning of the end, and at the end. And the end you will have prepared for yourself is solitude, the mirror without a reflection. The image of the one or the other of you will be effaced first, her image from beside yours, or your image from beside hers, and the one or the other of you will inevitably be left alone. . . . You might disappear at the same time, both of you together. It has happened. Let us admit this extraordinary coincidence—but after

that? How empty the mirror will be! No one will ever be reflected in it again!

But the proud man replies, "What matter? I do not wish anyone to watch me grow old and die. I prefer to grow old alone, by myself in my corner, and to die suddenly, with no one to regret me but without having to regret anyone."

Is he quite sure that so much pride is not the pride of despair? Is it not especially bitterness and vexation? You lay down as a principle that it is excellent not to have children and you congratulate yourself first of all because you do not love them. But one must have children to love them, and he who has none does not know what it is like.

Besides, one does not love children as one loves a precious ornament or some graceful and winning animal.

"But," you still grumble, "animals are better than people and for that very reason I prefer them to children."

Whether animals are better than men depends upon which animals and which men. And your favorable but quite gratuitous hypothesis of the superior goodness of animals probably springs from the fact that you do not know what animals think, and especially what they think of you. If animals could talk otherwise than as they are interpreted in fables by men, perhaps men would lose their illusions as to the superior goodness of these brave,

kind, excellent animals with their extra-human, their super-human virtues.

As to preferring them to children, why prefer them? There is nothing incompatible between the love of children and the love of animals.

They say, "When you are devoted to animals you don't love children." That is true only of a few fanatics or crazy old women. In any case, it is absurd to suppose that any dog, cat, parrot, white rat, or guinea-pig, however ravishing, could ever take the place that would be held without them by a small girl or boy; that's another matter entirely.

What is true is that a new-born baby, with its downy head, its greedy little mouth, and its eyes that turn towards the light, looks a little like a young sparrow that has fallen out of its nest. What is true is that in their first attitudes and gestures babies usually have the instinctive and supple grace of wild animals; you will see one of them stretch and curl up like a kitten and another, chubby and clumsy, on all fours, has the pretty, blundering friskiness of a puppy.

Painters of children are quite right when they put children and animals together in their paintings. But it is an entirely external association and they can no more replace one another than flowers can replace fruit. That is, it makes no difference whether you place a basket of fruit or of flowers on a table as a decoration. But if you want dried

raisins you cannot replace them with dried orchids and camellias.

The lords and ladies of former days, as they lay on their stone tombs, usually had a faithful greyhound carved at their feet. Better than this marble or alabaster greyhound to watch over and guard our memory, to perpetuate or prolong it, are our children, our grandchildren, and the children of our grandchildren. We can safely rely on them.

XIV. A GAME OF GRACES

People usually have more important concerns than to pay constant attention to what we are doing. In other words, they pay far less attention to us than we have a tendency to imagine. Let us lose the habit of supposing that our least gesture interests the whole of humanity and that we are the center of the world. So, our life will gain a great deal in comfort and simplicity. Many acts are performed primarily or solely because of others who were not thinking of the matter at all and did not expect so much from us.

I notice that when you enter a public place or prepare to pass a group on a street corner, your bearing changes immediately; consciously or not, you assume an attitude and an expression, and nine times out of ten you put your hand to your throat to make sure your tie is right. It would be so much simpler and more convenient to walk through life as if no one were looking at you. Are you sure they are looking at you? And if they do look, why not show yourself as you are?

Do let your tie alone!

Respect for our fellows and a fear of what they will say of us rule most of our conduct and our

social relations. Or rather pride does, just pride, great pride. If only we were proud of what we attempted to do or of what we accomplished! But we are far prouder of the impression made by our success or our attempts than of the object we had in view.

There is something exalting and magnificent about pride, but only on a desert island, such pride as Robinson Crusoe must have felt at watching his efforts succeed. But he did not play to a gallery; the only gallery he had was Friday. Let us grant him Friday and admit that he was not proud for himself alone but also for Friday.

A truly strong man is a man who lives in society just as he would live on a desert island, and to whom his own conscience serves as this island. But this desert island should not be that of his pessimism and his misanthropy.

Pessimism and misanthropy are also forms, but most displeasing forms, of excessive pride. It is because you consider yourself most virtuous, the only really virtuous man, that you denounce the vices of the society that surrounds you; because you consider yourself infinitely good and kind that you proclaim society entirely composed of the wicked.

Wicked people do exist, but as a general rule there are not nearly so many of them as you might imagine, and they are rarely deliberately wicked

either by intention or profession. When you underestimate other men, what are you seeking or seeming to seek except reasons for thinking still better of yourself?

Ah, the pride of virtue! There is also a pride of vice which is odious, but it injures only vice. The pride of virtue is insupportable, and it is especially insupportable because of the danger that it may make us dislike virtue.

Are you virtuous, perfectly virtuous, endowed with all the virtues? That's good, that's very good indeed, but what need have you to display it and to proclaim it from all the housetops? We should be sure to notice that you were virtuous, anyway, and if by any chance we did not, you would be no less virtuous for all that. . . . One is virtuous through virtue, for one's own sake and not because of others, especially not in opposition to others.

Life and society are so organized that the art of living is necessarily the art of living in society, therefore it is an art that demands on principle a great deal of indulgence and discipline.

Those who are familiar with the traffic problem of great cities have noticed that what complicates the problem most is the extreme variety and difference of the locomotion used. . . . A pushcart can bottle up behind it the fastest automobiles and impose on them its own dreary gait.

The diversity of characters is as great and as an-

noying as the diversity of means of locomotion, and we have to find our path, to move and go forward, through a society that, too, is composed of automobiles and pushcarts.

Lamentations, reproaches, and curses are of no use whatever. . . . Just listen to those of the drivers on their seats! . . . There's a great school for patience and level-headedness.

When you arrive late for a train, you express your feelings in violent outbursts against the company and the defects of our railroad system; all of which will not bring back the train that you have missed. Also there is no one in the world who listens with more philosophy and phlegmatic indifference to complaints, even when they assume the most aggressive and vehement form, than a station-master or a railroad employé. And I imagine that if the station-master has children, he does not fail to point out to them the travelers who have lost their tempers so that they may see the vanity of anger and learn how to control themselves.

They say that anger alleviates; instead it exhausts. Even if it is perfectly useless it is a great outlay of nervous energy. And if we could recover all the force that is lost in this way, merely in stations, there would no doubt be enough to start a special train. The man who never gets angry effects an appreciable economy of his

strength and a great saving of time. But is there a single human being, man or woman, who can boast of never having been angry? It is only after the burst of anger that we notice how absurd it is.

You know the admirable chorus to the Arabian song,

Quand mon père est en colère,
Il jett' son bonnet par terre,
Quand sa colère est passée,
Il ramasse son bonnet. . . .

I have often thought that we ought to have a phonograph or a music-box always at hand and this air and these wise words always ready to play whenever the discussion took a bad turn. But the exasperated speakers would begin by smashing the phonograph with a furious blow and putting the music-box out of order.

Not that I advise you to consider that everything is for the best in the best of possible worlds, or that the world never furnishes you with subjects for legitimate indignation. But after all, there is no need to throw your cap on the ground, your cap which you will later be obliged to pick up, sheepish and angry. Indignation is not anger.

They use the expression, "To go up in the air like cream soup." Does that mean that you should never heat milk over the fire? No, but watch the milk and watch the fire.

Another thing that wearies us even more than anger and makes us lose even more time is bitterness, hatred, which is really just prolonged and enduring anger. Beware lest you exhaust yourself terribly in going over and over the injuries done you and the injustice of which you believe yourself the victim, the wrongs one holds against this or that one.

Of course you cannot be the friend of all the world. If one had nothing but friends they would risk being commonplace indeed. But try to have your friendship so absorb your heart that there is no room left for suspicion and vengeance. When our hearts are so filled with friendship, our enemies will have to go and get themselves hated elsewhere. They are ignored and forgotten. They become a negligible quantity, not worth thinking about.

What I am trying to teach is not the forgiveness of injuries. I am no saint. To forgive an injury one must continue to think of the offender, and what I am advising you is to forget all about him—never to think of your enemies, to have all your thoughts caught, occupied, engrossed by your friends. It is not impossible and it is far more agreeable.

In short, it depends only on us to turn our thoughts entirely to agreeable people and things. Of course society is not composed entirely of heroes and saints, but is that any reason for seeing nothing

in it but robbers and prostitutes? We do not know what the future holds for us, but is that any reason for expecting only catastrophes? Do not let us take pleasure in spoiling our pleasure.

There are but two types of individuals whom I abhor, or who at least—let me not exaggerate—have always irritated me frightfully: those who boast of taking as their model poor Cassandra and predict every kind of misfortune; and those who take as their model Saint John of the Golden Mouth and insist on telling us all our faults.

One of the charms of existence is precisely the unforeseen, or rather the faculty we have of imaging whether the unforeseen will have brilliant or somber colors.

"I see black, I see black!" all these unlicensed Cassandras incessantly shout in our ears.

I do not go so far as to pretend that misfortunes come only because they are foretold, but whether foretold or not, they happen if they must happen. It serves nothing to destroy the present happiness.

Shall we no longer dare set one foot before the other because an abyss may always open beneath our feet? Let us go forward singing, which does not prevent us from taking our precautions, from carrying a staff and wrapping a rope around our body. Suppose the rope breaks; that is unexpected, but the cleft to which we cling is also unexpected, as

well as the root of the tree that will suddenly stop our fall. The prudent man acts as if neither good nor bad luck existed. He has a cord and a staff and he does not count on either the cleft or the root. Cassandra's pessimism has nothing in common with prudence. It consists, on the contrary, in thinking of nothing but luck and of bad luck at that.

It seems as if such persons invoked a catastrophe, not out of wickedness or baseness but so as to be able to declare, "I told you so." They triumph in adversity, the adversity of others; they are in their element. They hope to see you ruined or seriously ill or perhaps both, so that they may show both their foresight and their devotion; for it is true that they will generously offer you both their purse and their help, but with such an air of infallible superiority and satisfaction that you would have to be desperately in need before you could accept, before you could endure the kindnesses with which they would load you and not pitch them out neck and crop.

In any case, how is it possible for you to show them the least gratitude? Do not try to, they don't expect it. You may even be sure that your ingratitude will crown their hopes and fill them with pleasure as it will confirm the detestable opinion they are pleased to have of humanity. It will allow them to say complacently, "One's kind-

nesses always meet with ingratitude." They will be delighted.

Along with those who are so proud of forcing their unendurable solicitude upon you, those who "told you so," there are those who are going to "speak frankly to you"; the champions of frankness after the champions of altruism!

When anyone comes up to me with a beaming face and begins by saying, "Of course I am speaking for your own good" . . . how I distrust him! Others set themselves up as "frank speakers" and will not let themselves be stopped by good taste, by the most elementary proprieties, by the rules of politeness or of friendship. And in spite of that they boast, "As for me, you must take me as I am. I am Saint-Jean Bouche d'Or. . . ."

It is not very flattering to the eloquence of Saint John Chrysostom! for our man does not pride himself on his eloquence but merely on dashing headlong into a subject, without stopping to think of the consequences of his words or if they will be agreeable or disagreeable to you. Rather, he knows perfectly that they will be disagreeable, that when one is about to say something pleasant one doesn't feel the need of prefacing it with a declaration of principles, nor of calling in Saint John Chrysostom.

There is nothing to boast about in being outspoken with people. There is nothing easier—"I

have the habit of never mincing my words." What a bad habit!—"I always say everything I think." But no, that is exactly what you mustn't do.

When we speak, must we be constantly embarrassed by precaution and try to say by preference what we do not think?

But are you sure that what you think is true, and that it is a useful truth? Very few things are true in themselves, as evidence is true, without implying an element of personal evaluation. And yet it is in this evaluation that you usually show the brutality of your frankness, of what you call your love of the truth.—*Amicus Plato, sed magis amica veritas*—I should be tempted to translate it freely as, "What I like about truth is that, thanks to it, I can annoy my friend Plato."

That peasant from the Danube, that other Saint-Jean Bouche d'Or, is not an admirable example either, any more than all those other pretended heroes of a state of nature that set up their frankness against the lies of education and civilization. Far from wondering, "How frank they are!" I grow irritated and protest, "How disagreeable, badly brought up and difficult to live with they are!" Or else let them leave me alone.

If we admit that men have need of one another—and for that matter, that is why they live together in a society—the relations and transactions of this

society necessitate an exchange currency which is composed of a whole ensemble of formulas and usages, and this is politeness. To fail in politeness is to refuse to pay. "Shoot me if you wish, but be polite to me," said the venerable burgomaster of Bruges to the Germans during the investment of the city in 1914 when they were questioning him rudely and trying to order him about insolently.

Politeness becomes big things as well as little, since it accompanies our acts whether big or little, as well as our deep or superficial feelings; it is their way of presentation, their adaptation to the society in which we live. Without it we should place ourselves in an attitude of rebellion against and defiance of society, and we should then deserve to have society repulse and reject us.

Politeness, urbanity—in Greek or in Latin—there at its very beginning we find the same idea of a town, that is to say of a group. Politeness is essentially a gregarious virtue, but especially of a flock that has halted, that is installed and organized. Perhaps that is why, as we notice, it so often disappears in travel and in the different methods of public transportation—although for that matter, naval officers, who are great travelers by profession, are justly considered the politest men on earth.

I like to have them call what is really a most graceful game "the game of graces." It consists in sending a hoop back and forth with two sticks,

hoop and sticks being all ornamented with velvet and set off by a golden cord. They send the hoop back and forth with an easy gesture of their raised arms, as if the two players were saluting each other.

A conversation between polite people, which ought to be, as they say, a match of politeness, recalls both in its ceremony and its name the game of graces. There are the same sallies, marked by the same elegance, and each one throws a hoop which he strives not just to throw but to receive. Thus it is not enough to tell stories; you must be interested in those that are told you, for above all, you must catch the hoop that is thrown you, whether it is well or badly aimed.

And to make your relations with others pleasant and assure your reputation for politeness, it is best to know how to listen, much better than to try to make yourself heard. One can always listen while thinking of something else, simply punctuating the other's conversation with a few approving nods of the head. Never fear that any sign of agreement will ever be given at the wrong time! And in the same way you can always, at no matter what point in the conversation (and if you have not listened you will not be bothered by scruples), cry "Bravo!" and say admiringly, "How right you are!"

But this does not mean that your companion will never be right and will never deserve anything

but a polite *bravo*, an indifferent and obliging assent. You will do well to listen also, and to think also from time to time about what you hear.

Compliments are a necessary stimulant, and not merely for idiots. Do you not speak to your horse when he is about to leap over the obstacle or to climb the slope? Compliments that are not timely or that are out of proportion have made us lose the sense of their desirability as well as of their exact value. And with even more reason we have allowed the faculty of admiration to sink down in us until it is beginning to disappear and be entirely lost.

We no longer find anything to admire in any field, and that is a great pity. However, I am convinced that there is always something to admire, but our hearts refuse exaltation and enthusiasm. We are so afraid of ridicule that our tendency is to turn everything into ridicule—*ridiculus mus*. We no longer think about mountains or care to measure their heights, or whether or not their summits touch the clouds. All the mountains—*ridiculus mus*—seem struggling to bring forth a mouse.

Why are you unwilling to believe in anything great, to expect any good from men or from a city?

How significant and discouraging it is, this lack of interest in public matters. You suggest on principle that they are no concern of honest folk,

and if that is true it amounts to saying that you abandon the city to rogues. Actually you throw the axe away in despair, before you have tried it, because you see ahead of you only underbrush that prevents you from reaching the clearing. On the contrary, in order to hew a path through the underbrush to the clearing you ought to grasp it firmly, grasp it by the handle, a solid handle, stoutly fixed.

But you do not want me to lose my temper and you also want me to take an interest in politics?

I do not want you to get angry over nothing, nor do I wish you to be interested in politics, that is in nothing. I do urge you not to leave the field free to ignorant and dishonest men whom you would not permit to manage your business and to whom you are willing to abandon your country's business. Do you forget that your country's business is your own? I do not ask you to play politics, but to attend to your own affairs, to watch over them, not to let them be compromised, not to let them be in danger of collapse.

Do you see that shepherd's cottage and the field that is trodden down, plundered and laid waste about it? Yet it was not the shepherd who razed, pillaged, and trampled the field; it was the animals he tends. But it was he who brought them there and chose the inclosure and the field for their depredations. You do not need to see the flock of sheep to know about the ravaged field; it is enough

to notice the traces not of the sheep but of the shepherd, this cabin, this inoffensive and peaceful cabin perched on two wheels.

To each according to his merits, to each according to his virtues. I have never set up as an architect but many times I have wished to be the modest and conscientious workman busy on an edifice not built by him. On it others have engraved very simple and beautiful inscriptions—"Liberty, Equality, Fraternity"—"Honor and Country." My workman is busy effacing the vile inscriptions and shameful scrawls, stopping up cracks, clearing away the mildew and moss, beneath which these essential words are in danger of disappearing, these words which are the soul of our nation, the soul of our race.

But you no longer believe in words, you distrust words. For all that, this despised phraseology will merely yield place to another phraseology. The arrows you let fall will be picked up by your enemies and used to transfix you. "Stuff and nonsense, mere speechifying, no more general ideas, no more commonplaces like 'The day of glory has arrived'—stuff and nonsense!" But meanwhile others will announce that it is "the war to end war" and will stuff people's heads with nonsense quite at their ease and will speechify all they please. How dangerous it is, this pretended elegance of mind, this false modesty of the intelligence which disdain-

fully rejects the primal verities together with everything that is simple, everything that is healthy.

"I love my country"—a primal truth. "I am proud to be French!"—another primal truth. What "intellectual" or what man pretending to be one, would ever dare proclaim in a meeting of intellectuals that he loved his country and was proud to be French, without adding anything more?

I saw one day on the Place de l'Opéra some strikers whom the police were herding carefully as they came out of the subway. They were trying to break the lines of guards placed to prevent their getting into the Boulevard Haussmann, for the strike had been declared among the employés of two great shops on that boulevard, and the strikers proposed to "settle accounts" with the highly paid employés and the "scabs" who were still helping to carry on a much diminished business. Professional trouble-makers had, as always, joined the employés; there was thunder in the air and danger of a serious brawl. . . .

At this moment a regiment, with music at its head, chanced to turn into the square from the Rue de la Paix. . . . From that instant there was no longer any attempt on the part of the demonstrators to get into the Boulevard Haussmann. They rushed up behind the soldiers, fell in step with them, and marched along the boulevards towards the Bastille, escorting and following the music.

Ah, if we knew how to make use of military music and of the echoes it arouses in everyone's heart! Instead we exert ourselves to destroy its echoes, to turn them to derision, to announce that they are absurd, extravagant, inexplicable. To a sensitive soul, military music appears horribly common, horribly vulgar. Fie at this shocking vulgarity, at these people whom you see rush to follow the musicians! We beg you, no more military music and even more, no more soldiers!

All this smacks of stuff and nonsense, so for patriotism and heroism there is quite naturally substituted the stuff and nonsense of the anti-militarists, of the pacifists at all costs, of those without a country.

Do you suppose that if you were to suppress all the doctors and druggists, you would at the same time suppress epidemics? This is the reasoning of those who, in order to suppress war, recommend the suppression of the army and of frontiers if necessary—who accuse us of being enemies of peace because we still wish to remember our victory, because we will not consent to regret it, because we will not appear to be sad and ashamed because of it.

I find among my notebooks of before the War this note which I copy as it stands, with names and the date: *29th September, 1912.*

"You know that the hussars from Chamboran

who were at Senlis have just exchanged with the 3rd army corps and have come on joyously, by stages, to the garrison at Verdun, their new quarters.

"Well, on the day the regiment crossed Champagne it was quartered in a little village on the outskirts of Rheims. There is a château in this village where the colonel was lodged and in this château a little girl of six who, as you may imagine, was delighted enough.

"But at six you are ignorant of a lot of things and when you see from a window the flag, rolled in its case, carried ceremoniously to the colonel's quarters, why then you ingenuously ask your governess and then your Mama, 'What is that sort of big umbrella that they have hidden in the colonel's room?'

"Mama had to explain what was in the 'umbrella case' that so stirred the curiosity of her little daughter—and at dinner the colonel was told all about it. On which he led the child to his room and took the flag out of its case for her. Then the little girl of her own accord kneeled down and kissed the tri-colored silk.

"The next day, Colonel Carl de Charbonnières could not resist telling his assembled officers of this episode of his stay at the château of Count Bertrand de Mun. And that was how the echo of it reached me way off in Italy, because a friend, to

whom I am always extolling the marvelous flora of the Borromean Islands, was no doubt piqued and anxious to let me savor in exchange this pretty, this spiritual, this delicate 'French flower.' "

Why should I seek out just this note from among so many others, and copy it? But don't you see that it is a perfect model of "speechifying"? Yes, it is all there, isn't it, the colonel and the little girl, the hussars and the château, the flag and the flowers—even Rheims and Verdun. . . . It is true that at this date Rheims and Verdun were merely cities like any others—in September, 1912, we did not think of war, we could give ourselves up to the sweetness of living, could taste the charm of vacations and of autumn among the Italian lakes. . . .

I have resigned myself to the loss of this sweetness, and those of my generation will doubtless never know it again.

Let me at least believe in the illusions of my speechifying, believe that a flag rolled up in its case is something different from the umbrella case it resembles, believe in the flag, believe in French flowers and in France, believe in something and someone—believe . . .

XV. AND THEN THERE IS GOD

And then, as I have said, there is God—and thank God I am not the first to have said it.

However, as I have written this book, I have come to wonder if it were wise to reserve God for the end:—*And then* there is God?—*And first of all* there is God! . . . Some works are never finished —if I should have happened to leave incomplete just these pages—what would an art of living be worth where not a word had been breathed about a future life, either to affirm or to deny the belief? The future life, the immortality of the soul, the existence of God, that is another story, I declared, laboring first to find my way through our present life and to understand our human sentiments. Another story? No, it is our whole story, *the whole story!*

I have a charming and celebrated friend whose fortunate and fêted existence has flowed on like his work, all grace and levity. He came to see me, recently, and I noticed that his face was marked by unaccustomed gravity. He had come, in fact, to tell me that, since he was beginning his seventieth year, he had decided definitely to renounce those amusements and that frivolity with which he

had continued until lately to brave and deceive the young, with astonishing vitality. He had decided to alter completely his way of living and henceforth to lead a life which, if it was not austere, was at least quiet, entirely filled with dignity and serenity. He would leave in men's minds the memory of a wise and smiling old man, "because," he explained to me, "the memory we leave behind us depends entirely on what we have done in the last ten years of our life. We are judged only by those years. In short, only the last ten years count."

Ah, yes. But is my friend at seventy still so sure that he has ten more years to live? And even when we are not seventy, who is ever sure of having ten years before him in which to establish his posthumous reputation? How many never make their act of faith until their last hour, as I myself have done in these last pages? And we never notice that by dint of putting off until tomorrow or the following chapter, by dint of delay and evasion, we escape entirely from doing it. Now it is done, thank God!

It is done. It did not take long. I think it ought not to take long and that this last chapter, the one in which there is God, ought to be much the shortest of all.

I often think of a young man of letters who went to see Stephen Mallarmé to consult him about a

poem which he was planning to write, a poem on God.

"A fine subject," agreed Mallarmé.

"Isn't it? But you yourself, Master, do I dare ask you how you conceive it?"

Stephen Mallarmé took up a large sheet of white paper, and in the middle of the sheet, in that precise and learned hand of his which has delighted lovers of autographs, he wrote *God*.

Then he laid down his pen and was silent.

"And then, Master?" asked the young poet after a moment.

"Then? But that is all. There is nothing to add to that, and the most varied and profound considerations, the most subtle dissertations, the most magnificent poem would say less than those three letters. When one has said and written *God* he has said and written everything."

We say, I write here, "I believe in God, I believe in the future life, I believe in the immortality of the soul." To say why we believe is indeed another story and one which has always seemed to us so useless!

The faith of a charcoal-burner ought not to be his privilege alone, even though we may understand that a certain state of mind is peculiar to charcoal-burners, who live in huts in the midst of forests. What resembles a cathedral's pillars and arcnes more closely than the great trees of our

forests? In a hut in the midst of a forest, it doesn't occur to one to be disingenuous. I have the faith of a charcoal-burner, because I have never wanted to be disingenuous and to be disingenuous on this point has really no advantage whatever.

I still see that poor man—for though he was loaded down with decorations and in spite of his beautiful embroidered coat he was a poor man—I still see that poor devil of a prefect, charged with representing the government at an official burial and, obliged to be present at the religious ceremony, thought it right, at the moment of the elevation, not only not to kneel and bow his head, like everyone else, but to draw himself up proudly and throw out his chest, his head high, his eyes blazing, his chin forward. . . .

What a simpleton! he seemed to want to make it a personal question of the divine presence, either God or him. He let us choose between God and him, and he was anxious to show us that he had chosen. So had we. How is it possible that these vain idiots do not understand that, by facing with this firm arrogance the God who they pretend does not exist, they at that instant proclaim he does exist. And they dare, I repeat, "allow us to choose. . . ."

It is only too true, however, that very often we delay to state our choice, just as there are some

who never get their baggage ready until the last minute. It is a deplorable system and no doubt it is more deplorable yet to add that we give way to this system, even in the matter of our soul. We have the air of saying, and no doubt we do say, that we shall manage somehow to "get right with God. . . ."

What is it that holds us back? What prevents us? It is not ill-will but a lack of foresight that is part of the state of general and moral laxity in which we are pleased to live. We are never in a hurry to make up our accounts. We dislike writing down our expenses in a little notebook, we carry money around in our pockets and have neither brief-case nor purse. And we believe in God as in an uncle in America who will always intervene at the right moment to get us out of trouble, to save us from destitution and even, at need, to pay the checks which we have imprudently and thoughtlessly issued without making provision beforehand.

Then you believe in God because it is the hypothesis that demands the least effort, the least risk, because, in short, it is the most convenient hypothesis?

And what if I did? It is not forbidden to believe for such a reason. Remember Pascal's famous wager. . . . Perhaps it is not heroic, no doubt it would be better for us all to be heroes, but in default of living heroically let us at least learn to

live modestly and prudently. And if we cling to this modesty and prudence, why, we shall be doing pretty well after all.

The school chaplain, who prepared me for my first communion, had the peculiarity of possessing only four fingers on his right hand. This made a great impression on us, for we were convinced that the Abbé Fouché (that was his name), a former missionary, had had his fifth finger bitten off by a black cannibal. For that matter, the Abbé Fouché had never given us to understand, nor even hinted, anything of the sort, and now I am not even sure that he had really been a missionary. But our good chaplain's missionary expedition to the cannibal countries, the finger greedily nipped off and then savored by an amateur and voracious savage, these made part of that always somewhat fabulous folklore of childhood which we are distressed later to have explained more exactly to us.

However that may be, I am sure that the excellent Abbé Fouché had prepared me very well for my first communion, that I was full of veneration for him and that he was very fond of me, and as at this time I had a precocious and quite superficial reputation as a pianist, the chaplain, at the beginning of our week of retreat, suggested that I play the harmonium at those exercises and offices to which the organist did not come.

And that is how, installed at the harmonium of

the chapel, I played what I had been taught by my music master, which was a fantasy on the *Mascotte* and another on the *Grand Mogul.*

Sois gentil, mon petit ami,
Sois gentil,—kirikiribi. . . .

This "Kirikiribi" (even though it evoked a serpent but not one in any way connected with the apple) seemed to me to go marvelously with the "vox angelica."

The excellent Abbé Fouché seemed not a whit scandalized by this "Kirikiribi," nor by the other notes of a music that was assuredly profane. For that matter, I imagine that he was entirely ignorant of the repertory of operettas then in vogue.

But the good God himself, do you imagine that he was offended? Do you not believe that he was even pleased to hear a little boy play the *Grand Mogul*—to honor him and to give him pleasure, Kirikiribi—in the innocence of his soul and the purity of his heart, just as the famous juggler of Notre Dame once performed before the Virgin, on the day of her festival and because he had nothing else to offer her, his finest acrobatic feats, his most astonishing capers, and the most dangerous of his dangerous leaps?

Alas, why do we not keep this innocence, this purity? But they are in the hearts and minds of children like the light dust that covers the wings of

butterflies, like the fresh and fragile down on a peach.

No, the Abbé Fouché did not have his finger bitten off by a cannibal; no, *Kirikiribi* has nothing of a pious hymn about it, nothing of a credo; we shall discover this later as strong-minded persons. Ah, what a fine use to make of the mind and of strength, and how advanced we are now!

Advanced, certainly, but whither does this advance lead us? That is why, when death is in sight, so many persons, even those who had seemed the most determined, the most obstinate and the boldest, have been tempted to retrace their steps or at least to stop short in their path.

Death, always that. You know I said that if we would let ourselves, if we would let it, it would dominate every chapter of the art of living. At least it is natural that we should meet it again in the last chapter.

This art of living, as I have attempted to outline it broadly, is not a philosophical treatise, but for life to be an art, ought it not to develop harmoniously, to have a meaning?

Since I am neither a philosopher nor a theologian I make no boast of discussing or explaining the reasons that make me believe in a future life and in a God that determines it. I am neither a philosopher nor a theologian, rather a charcoal-

burner. And it is with the faith of a charcoal-burner that I affirm that in spite of everything we have done, thought, and loved during our few dozen years (to speak optimistically), if nothing were to endure, if everything were to disappear suddenly with us, life would truly not be worth the trouble of living. That an art, one so wretched and precarious? It would be absurd, it would be too stupid! . . .

Between two interpretations, two constructions of the mind, one that pretends to be strong-minded and one that nothing allows you to call weak-minded, why not choose the most favorable and comfortable construction, the one in which we shall be happiest and most securely lodged?

But why do I speak of construction? The strong mind limits itself to destroying, it does not construct. It leaves to the weak-minded the shelter which it despises. It dwells with its pride in the open desert, with no shelter against the storm and night. The latter knows, the former knows it does not know and is proud of it and, as the good folks say, it doesn't get him very far. Not very far or a very good death!

I once heard a great artist, who is also a firm believer, speak of his young son who had died heroically in the War. I heard him declare, not in a tone of resignation but of fervor, "I do not mourn him as a son, I pray to him as a saint!"

Another time, however, I was surprised to see one of the men who has the most ardent faith of all I have known (a sincere and perfect faith that has always aroused my admiration and, I confess, my envy)—I saw how, on the death of the wife he had loved from the first day with a sincere, devoted love, even this man's faith could not repress a movement of revolt and despair.

How can you revolt, how can you despair since you ardently, sincerely, firmly believe that life cannot be withdrawn except by the hand that gave it, and for a better end?

But the most believing of men, as this man indeed was, cannot help at first thinking as a man, and in a case like this he is less aware of reasons than of reflexes, of human, almost animal, reflexes. Only later comes reflection with its fertile hope opposed to our sterile despair, and after the vain and unjust revolt this precious, this marvelous consolation, this magnificent peace.

We must be on our guard and resist the impulse to transfer to the plane of eternity all the elements of our everyday emotions. We willingly imagine a life eternal based on the same principles and subject to the same conditions as those according to which we regulate our lives now. We would keep what we have and begin over again—the same feelings and, if we dared confess it to ourselves and

frankly admit our secret hope, the same sensations. Almost, the resurrection of the dead could appear like the usual resumption of activity every morning, especially since the eternity of death suppresses the notion of time and in it there is no difference between the few hours that precede waking in the morning and the millions of years that no doubt still separate the day of judgment from the present hour.

So we might easily be disposed to represent the future life as one in which we should continue to enjoy the poets and music, and perhaps to play bridge, and perhaps even to telephone. For we cherish life as it is, life which we ceaselessly blame, scoff at, and pursue with invectives and jeremiads, life complete and as a whole, with its pleasures and its annoyances; we cherish it even in spite of its imperfections, and can not resolve, or only with difficulty and rarely with good grace, to give it up.

That is why we are so anxious to believe that nothing will be changed, or that there will be only a minimum of change. We want to believe that those whom we are leaving will rejoin us as they are; and that we, as we are, will rejoin those we have left. I believe also that it depends upon the thoughts of the living if the dead are to be felt always present, as it depends upon the memory left by the dead if they shall never be abandoned by the living.

To prepare the memory we shall leave behind at our death, that is the great business of our life. Let us prepare it always and immediately and not only, like my celebrated and charming friend, when we think that we have only ten years left to live.

The art of living is the art of surviving in the memory of those whom we love and who love us. It is not enough to desire it, we must strive to attain it.

And first, so that people may love us when we are no longer here, let us neglect nothing that would make us loved while we are here. Let us not be carried away by *things,* dominated by *events.* Let us not seek to excuse human brutality, villainy, and stupidity by washing our hands of them, taking, of course, no part in them, but declaring lightly, "It is human," when life is base and ugly. Life that is base and ugly is not life, or rather there has been no art of living, for there can be no art of living basely and hideously.

The art of living is to strive to beautify our life and that of others, and we shall survive through the memory we have left of such an effort. One remembers the effort even better than one remembers the success.

Then when we go away, those whom we love and for whom we strive, those who love us because we have striven loyally for them (let us hope they

will be the same) will not speak of this and that at our burial. They will weep, perhaps, but the weeping is unimportant; they will be sad and especially they will remember.

Yes, it will be like those journeys where you repeat, "Tomorrow we shall be in such a place. . . . We were in that other place ten days ago." Our friends, and of course in the first rank of our friends are our children and our husband or wife, our friends (oh, not all the time but on occasion, now and then) will remember a word of ours, a gesture which they will evoke kindly, with tender sadness, affectionately, with regret and sweetness, "He used to say . . . he used to do that. . . ."

The art of living is to have lived in such a manner that they think of us sometimes, kindly and affectionately, and regret us a little.

We ask no more—and this will be very good indeed.

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